



European
Commission

Report on the implementation of Ecological Focus Areas

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Agriculture
and Rural
Development



Context and purpose of the report

- Adopted 29th March 2017
- Legal obligation to report on EFA implementation
- Overview evaluation of first 2 years' implementation
- Preliminary view of potential environmental impacts
- Consider whether to increase EFA from 5% to 7%



Context and purpose of the report

- Updates and expands 2016 Greening Review
- Will contribute to:
 - evaluation of greening (including environmental benefits of EFAs) to be finalised by end of 2017
 - 2018 Report on CAP monitoring and evaluation



EFA objective

- to safeguard and improve biodiversity on farms
- motivated by need to address environmental pressures linked to farming practices:
 - biodiversity
 - also soil, water and climate

EFA obligation

EFAs can take various forms: e.g. fallow land, field margins, hedges and trees or buffer strips -> **direct biodiversity benefits**



Some productive areas: e.g. Nitrogen Fixing Crops (NFC) and Catch crops (CC) -> **indirect biodiversity benefits (input reduction)**



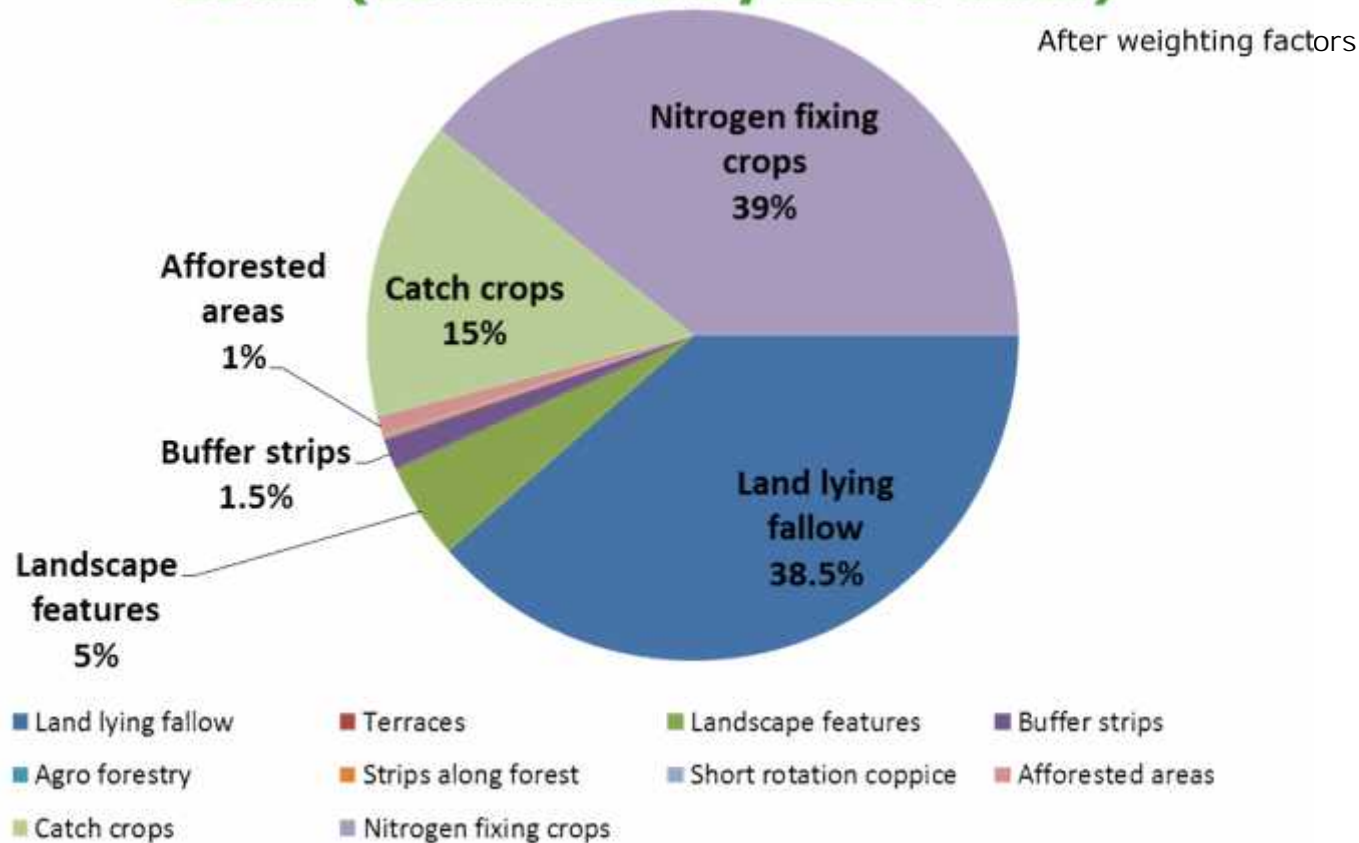
Trends 2015-2016

- 2015 implementation figures confirmed

Indicator	2015 SWD	2015 EFA report	2016 EFA report
Agricultural areas subject to greening	72 %	75 %	77 %
Arable land subject to EFA	68 %	70 %	69 %
EFA areas before weighting factor	14 %	13 %	15 %
EFA areas after weighting factor	9 %	10 %	10 %

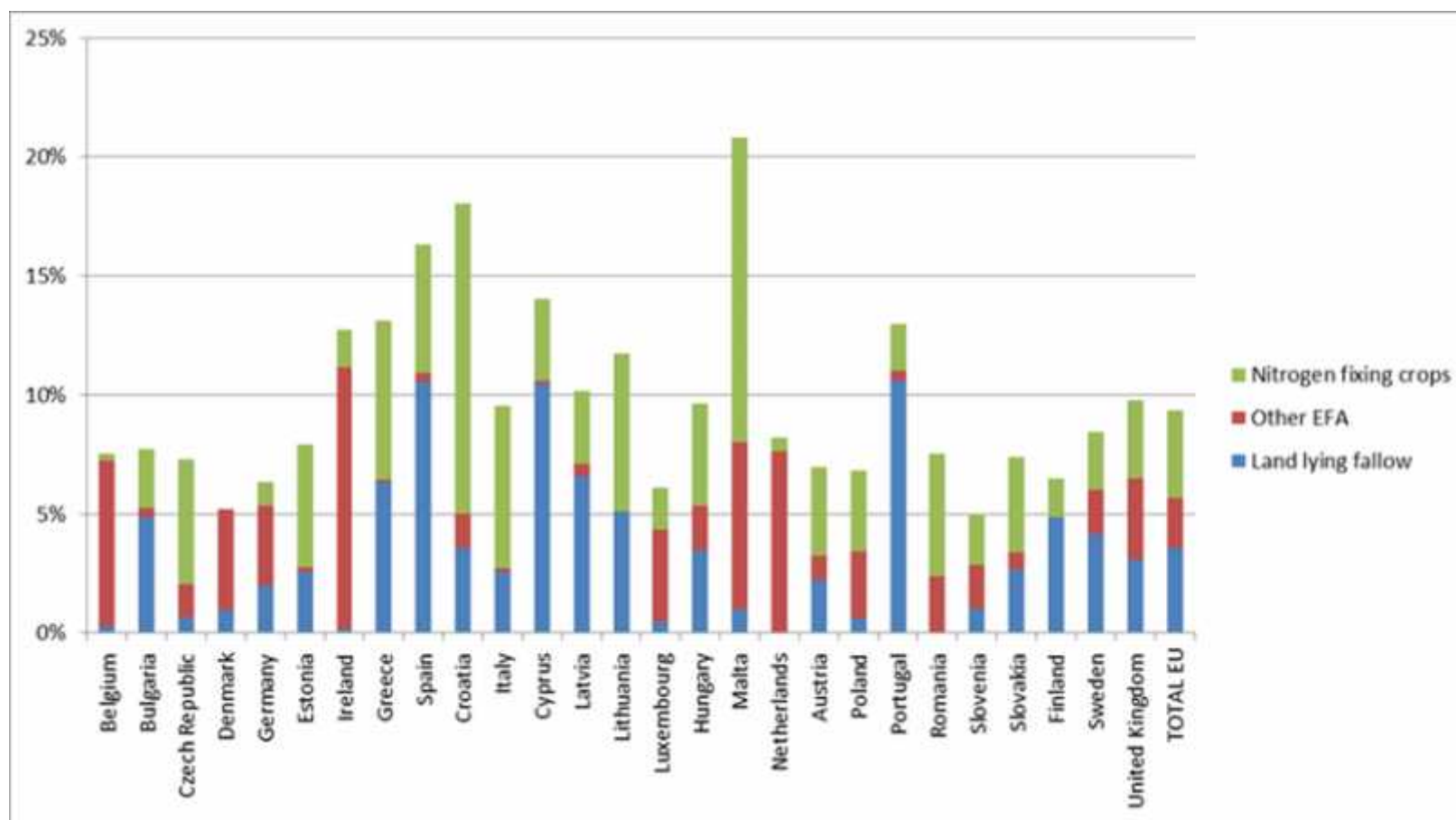
- Around 70% EU arable land subject to EFA obligation.
- Remainder exempted (organic farms, small farms)
- Almost 8 million ha EFA (13% of area under EFA obligation - 10% after weighting). (2015 figures)

Composition of the EFA obligation per EFA type – EU level – 2015 (confirmed by 2016 data)



➔ Predominance of Nitrogen fixing, Fallow, Catch Crops: 92.5% of total EFA (after weighting)

EFA by MS and EFA type (2015 - confirmed by 2016 data)



Potential benefits of EFAs

➤ Biodiversity



➤ Ecosystem services (pollination, pest and disease control, chemical condition of freshwater, soil erosion)



Potential environmental effects assessed based on :

- a study by the Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC)
- Literature review



Potential benefits of EFAs

Benefit depends on the type of EFA

- highest biodiversity and ecosystem services potential:
 - landscape features
 - land lying fallow
- lowest potential:
 - where catch crops predominate

Potential benefits of EFAs

- Positive impact depends on management requirements:
 - ❖ type of soil cover for land lying fallow, different mixtures of crops for catch crops;



- ❖ cutting regimes, retention periods and the use of chemical inputs;



- ❖ the diversity of vegetation for landscape features.





Way forward

Changes to greening legislation introduce simplification and management practices such as:

- retention periods for fallow land and catch crops
- ban on the use of plant protection products

The Commission does not see a reason to increase EFA from 5% to 7%

Greater environmental benefits would come from shifts in farmers' choice of EFA type



Thank you