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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: The Common Agricultural Policy after 2027 – Definition of farmer
- Policy debate

This paper aims to facilitate the discussion on the proposed definition of “**farmer**” in the post-2027 CAP framework.

The objective is to identify a definition that provides a common Union framework, while leaving sufficient flexibility for Member States to reflect their agricultural structures, administrative systems, and national or regional specificities. The outcome of the discussion will be used, where deemed necessary, to support the further advancement of the Council’s work on legislative files.

Under the current CAP framework, the definition of farmer is broad and is complemented by the concept of active farmer. This allows Member States to distinguish between persons or entities carrying out agricultural activity and those who should be eligible for income support on the basis of a minimum level of genuine agricultural activity.

In the post-2027 framework proposed by the Commission, the definition of farmer was set out in the proposal for the National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPP proposal) , while the CAP-specific proposal uses that concept for the purposes of CAP interventions, including income support. The proposed framework moves away from a separate horizontal definition of active farmer and instead defines the farmer by reference to agricultural activity as a principal activity, while also covering persons whose principal activity is not agriculture but who are engaged in at least a minimum level of agricultural activity. In parallel, the CAP proposal provides that area-based income support should be primarily directed towards farmers who exercise an agricultural activity on their holding and actively contribute to food security.

Following the COREPER II decision on 28 January 2026, Cyprus Presidency proposed to integrate the farmer definition also in the CAP proposal, while remaining and mirrored in the NRPP proposal.

Following discussions with the Member States on the definition of farmer and income support, the Cyprus Presidency proposes a definition that seeks to simplify this approach by integrating, within the concept of farmer, elements that ensure a closer link with agricultural activity while allowing for sufficient flexibility to cover the diversity of farming models across the Union, including part-time, pluri-active and smaller farmers:

«Farmer means a natural or legal person or a group of natural or legal persons, regardless of the legal status granted to such group and its members by national law, managing a holding as defined in Article 4(15) of [NRPP regulation] and whose principal activity is agricultural activity, defined by Member States in accordance with Article 2b, point 3 of this Regulation;

Member States may decide that natural or legal persons, or a group of natural or legal persons, regardless of the legal status granted to such group and its members by national law, managing a holding as defined in Article 4(15) of [NRPP regulation], whose principal activity is not agricultural activity, are deemed to be farmers provided they engage in at least a minimum level of agricultural activity to be determined by the Member States in their NRPP.»

It has to be noted that for the purposes of this definition, the term “holding” is used as defined in Article 4(2), point (15), of the [NRP Regulation], while what is to be considered principal or minimum “agricultural activity” is to be further defined by Member States in their NRP Plans pursuant to Article 2b, point 3, of the [CAP Regulation].

The proposed definition covers two situations:

- a. persons whose principal activity is agricultural activity. Member States would define the criteria for determining principal activity, taking account of their administrative systems and available data.
- b. If so decided by the Member State, persons whose principal activity is not agricultural activity, but who are nevertheless engaged in at least a minimum level of agricultural activity, to also be defined by Member States. This is intended to avoid excluding part-time, pluri-active or smaller farmers.

The definition further clarifies that collective structures may be covered regardless of their legal status under national law such as producer groups or cooperatives or other collective farming or farmer-led structures. The proposed definition already introduces a certain level of targeting by requiring the farmer to carry out agricultural activity, either as a principal activity or at least at a minimum level, as defined by the Member State.

At the same time, the question remains whether this definition could be sufficient for the purposes of income support, including in relation to the farmer’s contribution to food security, or whether further targeting should be introduced. Such further targeting could be developed either through a separate concept of active farmer or through specific eligibility conditions in the income-support provisions.

This approach allows delegations to first discuss the horizontal definition of farmer, while leaving open the possibility to consider, at a later stage, whether additional criteria are needed to target income support more specifically towards farmers contributing to food security, under the Working Party on Horizontal Agricultural Questions (WP HAQ) and the SCA.

In view of the above, delegations are invited to reply to the following:

Does your delegation agree with the proposed definition of “farmer”? Delegations are invited to indicate the reasons for their position and, where appropriate, to propose alternative wording or additional elements to be considered.
