

(Non)Reform of the European Common Agricultural Policy: Insiders' perspectives

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Abstract

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is one of the European Union's most important and most controversial policies. The conventional explanation (Czyżewski, 2016; Schmitz, et al., 2010) for the policy's lack of radical reform is that rent-seeking agricultural lobbies have captured the state and are vetoing it. Using 48 approximately hour-long qualitative elite interviews with high ranking officials of the European Commission (EC), General Secretariat of the Council (GSC), and Member States' representatives in the Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA), this paper presents an insiders' perspective on CAP reform. Although a majority of the top officials and diplomats interviewed endorse some form of agricultural exceptionalism—defined as 'the idea that agriculture is a sector unlike any other economic sector, and, as such, warrants special support' (Skogstad, 1998, p. 467)—and were therefore themselves not in favour of radical CAP reform in the form most commonly proposed by economists (see Anania, et al. (2010)), they generally rejected the hypothesis of the agricultural lobby's influence. Many Member States' representatives (and those EC officials who favoured the "evolution, not a revolution" approach) commented that, while they shared many or most of the agricultural lobby's concerns, agricultural lobbies in many Member States had a tendency to make unrealistic and unreasonable demands for the given political and financial environments and that they offered no alternative policy solutions in situations where policy makers could not meet their demands. Policy makers, therefore, commonly made decisions with limited input from agricultural lobbies. A handful of EC officials and Member States' delegates who saw a need for radical CAP reform gave a variety of reasons for its absence, which resonate with the conclusions in Swinnen's (2015) edited analysis of the last CAP (non)reform in 2013. However, some potential causes discussed in Swinnen (2015) receive more affirmation than others. And in addition to those already discussed in length in Swinnen, (1) the independence and isolation of the ministries of agriculture within Member States and (2) the way in which the CAP budget is negotiated in EU also emerged as political-institutional arrangements of the EU that have a strong anti-reform bias embedded in them. Interviews also reveal that the Council and the Parliament in particular are acting as strong anti-reformist pressure groups in the multi-level policy making arena. The Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission (DG AGRI), an EU equivalent of the Ministry of Agriculture, was perceived by those interviewees as somewhat more progressive and open than its Member States' counterparts due to the EC's internal consultation procedure with other DGs. Finally, the way budgetary negotiations are conducted—separately from the substance of the CAP reform and using past budget allocation as a starting point—was seen to introduce strong status quo bias.

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Introduction & Empirical Puzzle

The CAP is one of the most important and also one of the most controversial EU policy. It is important because it still accounts for nearly 40% of the EU budget, most of which is spent supporting farmers' incomes, even though agriculture only accounts for 5.2% of employment in the EU and only contributes 1.2% to the overall GDP. It is controversial, among other things, because 'the case for the CAP's income support is difficult to make in a market economy where economic agents in other sectors also face the risk of gradual or sudden income decline' (Pelkmans, 2006, pp. 218-219). Due to severe pressure, the CAP has clearly been reformed in the last three decades. However, the reforms have primarily changed the way *how* farmers receive their rent.² There has been a shift from production subsidies to direct payments which can be conceptualized as ill-targeted welfare. Reforms have also changed *who pays* for the CAP as there has been a shift from consumers to taxpayers, but these reforms have not done away with the rent granting core of the CAP. Furthermore, there has certainly been a shift in *who exactly benefits* from the CAP (see Figure 1 below), as agricultural producers are increasingly sharing their rents with non-farming landowners.³ Finally, reforms⁴ have also changed how much the CAP costs altogether. Since mid-1990s, a declining trend can be observed when the CAP's budget is compared to GDP (see Figure 2 below). However, at the same time, budgetary costs—although now fixed in nominal terms—have grown, despite the reforms. Up until the last 2013 reform, this held true even when budgetary costs were adjusted for inflation⁵. Problems⁶ caused by the CAP and the persistence of the agricultural community's rents highlight the need for further, and more importantly, fundamental reforms of the CAP (Anania, et al., 2010).

Problems of efficacy and equity, however, are nothing new to the students of the CAP. Nello (1997) recalls how the frustration with the CAP led many agricultural economists in the 1980s to doubt whether the traditional neo-classical economic model can be employed at all when agricultural policies are studied. It was commonly acknowledged already back then that farm policy decisions were not made based on welfare analysis. What emerged was the following mindset:

If political feasibility was an obstacle to adopting the reforms proposed, [then] perhaps it should explicitly be taken into account in policy models. If agricultural economists extended their field of study to the political decision-making process, they might be able to identify sources of reform resistance and suggest ways in which this could be overcome (Nello, 1997, p. 3).

² Rent here refers to the reward derived from "rent seeking" by farmers. "Rent seeking" in this context can be understood as 'the act of trying to seize an income flow rather than create an income flow' (Hindriks & Myles, 2006, p. 335).

³ About 45% of the direct payments benefit non-farming landowners instead of farmers. The other major CAP policy implementation mechanism – market price support – does even worse with farmers getting only 48%, while 38% would go to real resource costs and input supplies (Baldwin & Wyplosz, 2009, p. 376).

⁴ The four reforms of significance usually discussed are called the MacSharry reform (or 1992 reform), Agenda 2000 (or 1999 reform), Fischler Reform (or Mid-Term Review or 2003 reform), the CAP Health Check (or 2008 reform) respectively. Most recent, Ciolos CAP Reform, was agreed in late 2013.

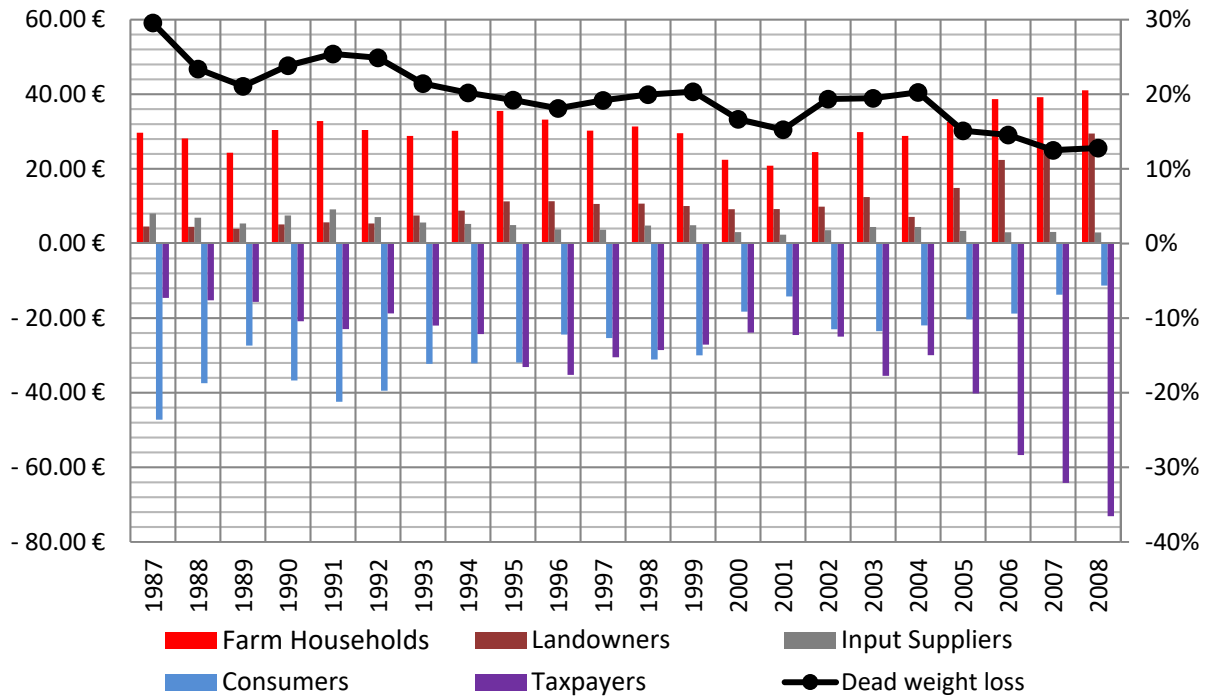
⁵ The CAP cost taxpayers 37,8€ billion in 1993 and 60,3€ billion twenty years later in 2013. EURCPI inflation in the twenty year period is 52,13%. This means that if the CAP's cost had exactly paced inflation, the CAP would have cost 57,6€ billion in 2013, not 60,3€ billion.

⁶ A good critique of the most recent CAP reform proposals from DG AGRI (2018; 2018; 2018) has been produced by none other than the European Union's own Court of Auditors (2019).

Figure 1: Estimated Distribution of benefits and costs of the CAP, 1986-2008

Billion ECU/EUR

Dead Weight Loss

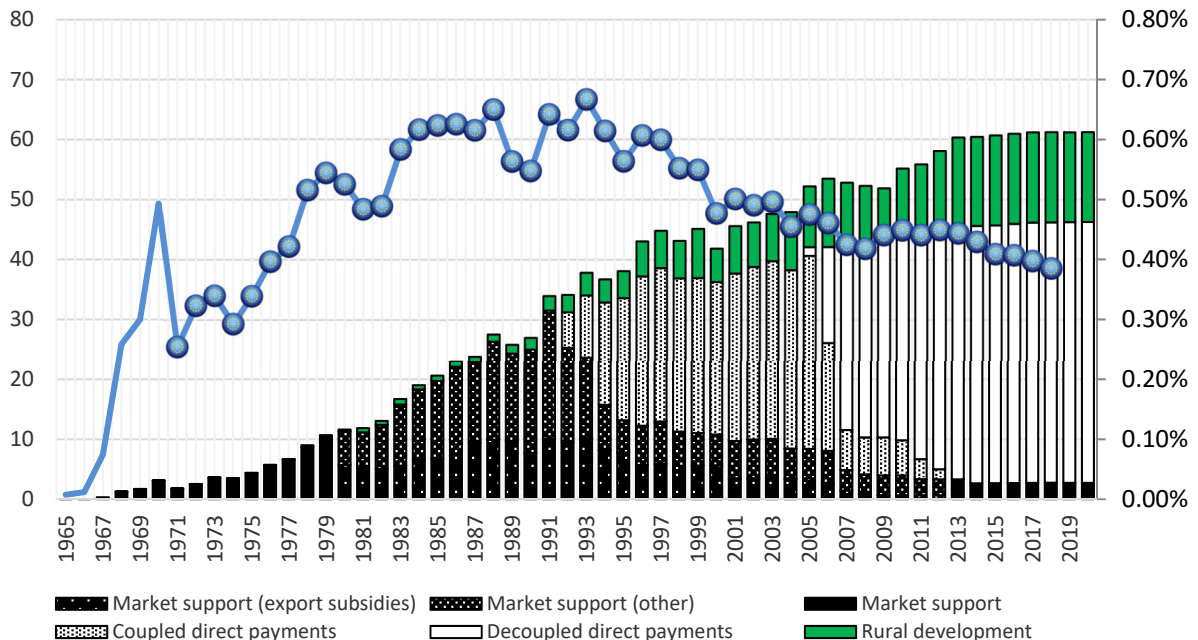


Data source: OECD (2011, p. 107)

Figure 2: CAP's budget evolution, 1980-2010

Billion ECU/EUR

As a percentage of EU GDP



Author's calculations and DG AGRI. Data Sources: The CAP expenditure break down of the 1965-2012 period from the author's personal email communication with Mr. Frank Bollen, Deputy Head of the Budget Management Unit, DG AGRI. Future projections of the CAP expenditure from The Commission's (2013, p. 4) overview of the reform. GDP in current prices, national currencies, until 1994, from OECD (2013). Danish Kroner and British Pound annual average exchange rates from 1973 until 1994 from Eurostat (2013). GDP in market prices in ECU/EUR since 1995 from Eurostat.

Considering the complex quasi-federal decision-making of the European Union involving a number of actors at multiple levels and multi-issue inter-governmental bargaining, in-depth political science research is needed to bridge this gap encountered by agricultural economists. After all, distinguished agricultural economists (such as Tangermann (1991), Swinbank et al. (2004), and Anania et al. (2010) and Buckwell et al. (2017)) have proposed balanced solutions⁷ to address the CAP's shortcomings every time reforms have been deliberated on. It is seemingly that their and their colleagues' suggestions have been disregarded when it comes to the final outcome of the reforms.

At this point, one might ask what is there to study? Is it not evident that special interests—with agricultural lobby being the most obvious suspect as farmers have gained the most from the CAP (see Figure 1 above) and also have the most to lose from any radical reform—have somehow captured their national governments and/or the European Commission? Indeed, various authors, such as Schmitz et al. (2010), have precisely advanced this rent-seeking narrative to explain the CAP. However, a closer look into the issue reveals that this “usual suspects” explanation cannot *fully* account for the dismal characteristics of the CAP. A study by Cunha & Swinbank (2009), employing an anonymous survey of top decision-makers, has shown that the agricultural lobby has had little impact on the past CAP reforms, not because it is not powerful—it is still one of the most important forces to be reckoned with—, but because it has a tendency to make unreasonable demands and it offered no realistic solutions for dealing with budgetary and trade policy pressures. Both national and supranational agricultural lobby groups were sceptical, if not staunchly anti-reform, but this did not prevent previous reforms from taking place. Closed-door discussions in the Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA) and both public and closed-door debates of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council of the EU (AGRIFISH) and interviews with policy-makers—conducted as a part of a larger research programme—generally confirm this. For example, one high-ranking DG AGRI official divulged in an interview that (s)he personally challenges anybody to tell him/her the time when the DG AGRI made a proposal that COPA-COGECA liked! The same official went on to elaborate that:

Especially after the enlargement there is so much split[ing] among [farmers lobbies] themselves that they come up late with positions that don't really match! And in the years I have been in DG ARG1, I have seen DG AGRI being much more sensitive to national sensitives, to ministers' and the national interests. [...] The COPA COGECA sees us as a balancing force [against the environmental lobby] because otherwise it would go to a different direction. But they don't really play a role. When I see and compare [COPA COGECA] with the Farm Bureau⁸, which is one of the 10 strongest lobbies in Washington, this [COPA COGECA] doesn't have power. (high ranking EC official, 2018) (personal views)

Another high-level EC official recalled the attitude he encountered towards farm lobbies in other parts of the Commission:

The first question that the Commissioner in charge of the budget at the time asked me [was]: “tell me why I would have to support a community that—no matter what I do—is always complaining?” Because why would you support someone throwing eggs to your window every day? (high level EC official, 2018) (personal views)

⁷ Tangermann (1991) and Swinbank et al. (2004) and a group of leading European agricultural economists' (Anania, et al., 2010) proposals can be only described as radical reforms by the CAP standards.

⁸ American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF)

Thus, the absence of radical reform cannot be explained by the farmers' lobby *alone*. There must be something *beyond rent-seeking*.

The intergovernmental theory of the European Union and CAP (for example Moravcsik (2000)) is also not easily applicable because of co-decision and because it assumes that Member States are unitary and rational actors. The latter would be incompatible with the observed puzzling interest some net contributors have with increasing the CAP budget. Although, it is clearly understandable why those Member States that are net-beneficiaries of the CAP budget would like to maintain, or even increase, the CAP budget. Yet, defenders⁹ of the CAP budget also include, for example, France and Finland (Matthews , 2018). These Member States are net contributors not only when it comes to the whole Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), but also in terms of the CAP budget within it. Matthews notes that France—which during the 2013-2019 financing period moved money from 1st to the 2nd pillar of the CAP—could effectively increase spending on its farmers by reversing this shift. If France moved funding from the 2nd pillar (which is co-financed from the French national budget) to the 1st pillar of the CAP (which is wholly EU financed) and then increased the co-financing of the 2nd pillar (that is to replace the EU money taken out of 2nd pillar from national budget), then France could end up with an even higher overall agricultural expenditure than it has now. If it so desired, of course. That is, the French government could, if it desired, bring about a policy that would result in higher direct payments and higher rural development funding. Matthews suspects that:

The answer to this puzzle [why the French government doesn't do the aforementioned procedure] lies in the political economy of agricultural budget negotiations. If the French Minister for Agriculture Stéphane Travert can create support for an increased CAP budget, then the money arrives in his Ministry without any further negotiation. If he wants to increase agricultural spending from the French national budget, then he must negotiate with the French Finance Ministry for those resources. These would not be easy negotiations, particularly if he wants a significant increase in decoupled payments. (Matthews , 2018)

If Member States were unitary rational actors, then such a Member State-level internal struggle would either not take place or at least not manifest itself at the European level.

Thirdly, it can be argued that public opinion is not the cause either. It is true that not long time ago, the majority of EU citizens (59%) were also in favour of not reducing the current support levels. However, 53% of the people surveyed by Eurobarometer in 2008 had never *heard* of the CAP. Another 34% had heard of the CAP, but did not really know what it was (The Commission, 2010). Furthermore, politicians who would like to keep CAP as close to the current layout as possible eagerly bring up “societal expectations” in the context of CAP reform debates. They do so because they know that while the general public is uninformed about agricultural politics, people nevertheless have – often emotional and strong – visions about what rural life and farming should look like. Some members of the general public therefore often request the delivering of a number of unachievable and/or unreasonable – from what one could perhaps call an evidence-based public policy perspective – and/or self-contradictory objectives. All of this offers entrepreneurial politicians ample of opportunity to find justification to their chosen policy stance. The absence of radical reform should not be seen as

⁹ Signatories of the so-called Madrid Declaration (France, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Finland and Greece, 2018).

the will of the people because the uninformed general public can be called to support a wide variety of positions, including pro-reformist ones.

Therefore, the CAP is an empirical puzzle: On the one hand, the CAP causes many problems for both national and supranational authorities in Europe without bringing substantial benefits—as noted by the European Union’s own Court of Auditors (2019). Radical reform could bring economic benefits to those authorities (both in terms of drawing legitimacy from good governance and in terms of using funds freed from CAP to satisfy other constituencies) and to a number of other powerful actors, the latter including (non-agricultural) business lobbies and the EU’s trade partners. On the other hand, the main beneficiaries, while far from negligible when it comes to power, do not appear to be strong enough to maintain their rents through rent seeking, especially considering that institutional reforms of the EU have weakened veto players’ hands with the introduction of qualified majority voting. As some eminent observers have noted, ‘[i]t would therefore be logical to expect much more significant policy adjustments than were observed’ (Swinnen, 2014, p. 138). Yet, we have not seen any meaningful overhaul of the CAP, only muddling through with incremental tinkering.

Solving this empirical puzzle can potentially contribute (more narrowly) to understanding multi-level governance in the EU and (more broadly) to Neo-Institutional Economics (NIE). With the NIE—a term which Nobel Laureate, North had borrowed from Eggertsson’s (1990, p. xii)—research project, North had set out ‘to discover how institutions evolve through time and why institutions that produce poor economic (and political) performance can persist’ (North, 1994, p. 12). This new institutional economics-approach means applying the methodology of economics to research how institutions affect the addressees of rules, how institutions come into existence, and, perhaps the most relevantly for policy, how they should be designed in order to fulfil selected objectives (Voigt, 2002, pp. 22-44). Applying economic methodology to non-market decision-making also forms the core of Public Choice¹⁰ (Kirchner, 2007, p. 21), which has the same subject matter as political science. Together with ‘the need to integrate the insights of other social sciences, of context and to create a better interaction with policy-making,’ it forms an approach that Csaba calls ‘new political economy’ (Csaba, 2007, p. 21).’ This paper aims to help political scientists and policy-makers¹¹ understand what obstacles are faced when improving European Union governance in general and agricultural policy in particular.

Theory and hypotheses

A number of different theories from path-dependency (Kay, 2003; Daugbjerg, 2009) to joint-decision trap (Roederer-Rynning, 2010; 2011)—just to name few—have been used to explain the absence of the radical reform of the CAP. However, a combination of multiple explanations appears to be a more promising approach than reliance on a single theory or explanation. Hence, in the research conducted

¹⁰ Focus on non-market decision-making allows Public Choice to be distinguished from “individual choice” which deals with only one segment of resource allocation and is neglecting resource allocation by non-market mechanisms, e.g. the state with its voting mechanism and its bureaucratic system (Kirchner, 2007, p. 21).

¹¹ It would be especially interesting and relevant to those policy makers who are above or not directly engaged in agricultural policy making but who nevertheless have to make important decisions regarding issues like European or national budgets which weigh heavily on agricultural policy.

for this paper, a number of mutually inclusive hypothesis were tested.¹² Hypotheses to be tested are inspired by the Swinnen (2015) edited book's conclusions. In his summary analysis of the 2003 and 2013 reforms of the CAP, Swinnen identifies five primary pressures for change: trade (WTO), budget, food safety and environment, enlargement, and food price (which he further splits into level and volatility). He also identifies four categories of actors, (1) Members States who joined with (1a) Nordic and (1b) Eastern enlargements and (2) the European Commission, which he further divides between (2a) DG AGRI and (2b) overall. From political institutional arrangements he evaluates the effects of QMV and co-decision, with the latter amalgamating the influence of the European Parliament, which Swinnen has not separately put on the board.

The early stages of research showed that some modification of Swinnen's nomenclature was necessary. When investigating the budget pressure, it would be interesting to look specifically into the question of whether Brexit is actually expected to cause serious budget pressure and if so, why it doesn't cause a more radical reform of the CAP. A similar sub-question can be asked about other priorities that have recently emerged, with migration crisis and the fight against climate change being the most salient ones. For methodological consistency with previous research, other pressures enumerated by Swinnen could be left "as is." Actors are—similarly to Swinnen—operationalized by dividing the European Commission into two. Another set of actors identified in this paper are the Plenary of the European Parliament and European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (COMAGRI). This deviates from the approach taken by Swinnen. While chapters of his edited book deal with the question of the role of the Plenary and COMAGRI in the 2013 reform, in his summary analysis he has lumped their influence together under the impact of the introduction of co-decision – or Ordinary Legislative Procedure as it is formally known – which is a political institutional arrangement.

Although it is very difficult to make a distinction if agricultural policy reform is seen as black box from the outside, this paper nevertheless tries to separate the impact of actors from the impact of political institutional arrangements—which could be both formal and informal. The principal reason for this is that, while the Treaty of Lisbon makes the European Parliament (EP) an equal co-legislator, there could be differences within the EP and anti-reform influences emanating from the EP have more to do with composition of the COMAGRI than with the fact that EP as a policy-making institution was granted (co)legislative powers.

Actors are also made out of lobby groups. Besides the obvious agricultural lobby, they now include green, taxpayer, consumers, and non-agricultural industry lobbies. And while not a lobby, agricultural economists are also operationalized as one—they too try to influence policy. This rearrangement allows for better counting of interviewees' answers to the question of whose influence they have observed and—perhaps even more interestingly—whose influence has been absent. Therefore, this paper's list of actors is longer and more detailed than that of Swinnen's (2015) concluding chapter. As for political institutional arrangements, this paper includes two from Swinnen's summary—introduction of QMV and co-decision. However, another two are added. The first of these is the isolation of national ministries from rest of the policy making bodies within a Member State. The second is budgetary sequencing and bargaining. This is different from Swinnen's budgetary pressure (which is focused on the pressure that the shortage of funds puts on policy-makers to come up with

¹² See methodology section below for further information.

more affordable solutions). Budgetary sequencing and bargaining as a political institutional arrangement refers, firstly, to the practice of agreeing that the budget of CAP is negotiated separately from the content of CAP reform itself. Secondly, it also refers to the practice of using past budgetary allocation as a starting position of negotiations. Rather than being formal rules, these are informal but ingrained practices which could be constituted as political institutional arrangements.

To sum it up, following mutually-inclusive hypotheses are tested in this paper:

- Pressures
 - Budget
 - Brexit
 - Other priorities
 - Trade
 - Enlargement
 - Food safety
 - Food prices
 - Level
 - Volatility
- Actors
 - Commission
 - DG AGRI
 - The rest of the COM
 - European Parliament
 - COMAGRI
 - Plenary
 - Council
 - Lobbies other than agriculture
 - Green
 - Taxpayers
 - Consumers
 - Economists
 - (Non-agricultural) industry
- Political institutional arrangements
 - QMV
 - Co-decision
 - Isolation of national ministries
 - Informal budgetary sequencing and bargaining rules

Methodology

From North's (1994, p. 12) quote in the introduction—emphasis on 'why institutions that produce poor economic (and political) performance can persist'—or from Odell's (2001) review of case study methods in international political economy, it might appear as if a comparative case study would have the best chance of solving the empirical puzzle. However, it can be argued that this is not so because, as Nello (1997) points out, the 'key to interpreting the EU experience is that the models were

developed for the US system and [...] lend themselves badly to what is very much the sui generis nature of EU agricultural decision-making' (Nello, 1997, p. 16). However, the sui generis nature of the EU does not mean that it cannot produce generalizable insights for the new political economy field. Rather, it means that the CAP is an excellent deviant case. According to Lijphart (1971), a deviant case is selected for studying in order to uncover why the cases are deviant—that is, to reveal important but previously uncovered information such as variables, or to refine the (operational) definitions of some or all of the variables (Lijphart, 1971, p. 692). Variables will be both *institutions* and *actors*. Swinnen (2015) has also added *pressures* to this list, such as world food prices, to name one. Lijphart makes it clear that such 'case studies can have great theoretical value. They weaken the original proposition, but suggest a modified proposition that may be stronger' (Lijphart, 1971, p. 692).

Data for this paper was collected as part of a wider research programme for a PhD thesis in 48 semi-structured elite interviews that took place mainly in 2017 and 2018. The interviews were, on average, 1h5min long and—with one exception¹³—were recorded at the consent of the interviewee using a mobile phone. Most interviews took place in Brussels usually at the office of the interviewee. However, a several also took place in the Council of the European Union's regular meeting place—the Justus Lipsius building—or in restaurants/cafeterias. Interviewees can be broadly divided into those who were working for the European Commission and into those who were working in the intergovernmental setting. Those working for the European Commission can be further divided into those who were working for the DG AGRI (four people) and those who were working for other DGs (also four people). People working in the intergovernmental settings can be divided between those who were attending the Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA) as a Member States' representative (38 people) and those who were working in the General Secretariat of the Council (two people).

Member States functionaries from all Member States were approached¹⁴. The SCA spokesperson and/or his/her deputy (job titles vary) from 26 Member States out of 28 (at the time of the interviews) were interviewed. Specific questions were *not* sent to the interviewees beforehand but they were given a broad outline of the topic matter. All interviewees were asked and expected to only give their personal views. The full list of questions can be found in Annex 1. The full list of the interviewees can be found in Annex 2.

Not all interviews proved equally useful. Some interviewees — despite being explicitly asked to take off their hat as a Member State or EU official — seemed to have been thinking about what "the party line" answer would be, instead of giving their personal opinion as was asked. However, since the majority of interviewees seem to be genuinely open and opinionated, patterns began to form quite fast. The most obvious pattern was the division between (1) those who endorsed some form of agricultural exceptionalism—defined as 'the idea that agriculture is a sector unlike any other economic sector, and, as such, warrants special support' (Skogstad, 1998, p. 467)—and were therefore

¹³ One interviewee from the European Commission, working in the DG other than DG AGRI, only agreed to the interview on the condition that it was not recorded.

¹⁴ From Member States representatives, only the SCA spokesperson for Poland turned the interview request down outright in late 2017, suggesting his colleague—who, in turn, never responded to email requests—be interviewed in his place. The Lithuanian SCA representative wasn't interviewed either due to unexpected illness preventing him from coming to the interview at pre-agreed date in late 2017 and there being no possible mutually agreeable alternative time in sight.

themselves not in favour of radical CAP reform in the form most commonly proposed by economists (see Anania, et al. (2010)) and (2) those who didn't do so. These patterns deserve research of their own. This paper, however, focuses on the answers from interviewees—about a dozen or so—who either explicitly didn't endorse agricultural exceptionalism or only endorsed it in a rather weak form¹⁵. For one, they—unlike those who advocated for agricultural exceptionalism—saw the need for a more radical CAP reform, either in principle or ideally (if political conditions permit it). For two, they had an excellent insight into how both the European Commission and/or Council work. For three, since the questions were explicitly asked in a way as not to put words into interviewees mouths, they were mostly—though, obviously, not entirely—“uncontaminated” by existing academic political science theories. That is, they mostly answered based on what they themselves observed or thought, instead of relaying already published academic political science theories back.

The first substance question required interviewees to imagine what ideal objectives of agricultural policy would be and then what ideal tools to pursue these objectives would be, giving interviewees a free hand to come up with a policy that would require radical reform of the CAP (or to come up with one that did not require such reform). If an interviewee did come up with a vision that required radical break from the existing policy, the interviewee was then prompted to explain why this vision is not being pursued. This forced interviewees to come up with a political explanation of the absence of radical reform. Answers to these follow question, in turn, are the main data source of this article. They were used to test the hypotheses enumerated above. For example, if a reform minded functionary thought that the absence of reform is due combination of factors A, B, and C, and another one thought that C alone is behind it, then pressure/actor/political-intuitional arrangement C gains a somewhat stronger confirmation of being the problematic factor. At the same time, factor D, not mentioned by anyone, cannot—by no means—be put to rest just because it was not brought up. Its absence is nevertheless noted where relevant.

Insider's perspectives

Pressures

Most of the pressures theorized to have impact on the CAP reform process did not pass an empirical test. That is, they were rarely, if ever, mentioned by the interviewees. For example, enlargement, food safety or food prices—both in terms of the level and volatility—never came up¹⁶.

Interviewees did, however, bring up the budget. But none of the interviewees thought that MFF negotiations would result in such a drastic reduction of the CAP's budget that this would bring about

¹⁵ For example, one interviewee stating that there would be no reason create the CAP if it didn't already exist, would be considered as one.

¹⁶ This could be partly explained by the timing of interviews. Interviewees were probably focused on thinking about the current CAP post2020 reform. Another explanation is the way the questions were asked. Interviewees were not explicitly asked to bring up pressures but rather elaborate on what prevents the policy from going where they would ideally like it to go. They may not have thought it relevant to mention pressure supporting move towards their desired direction.

more radical reform of the CAP. All interviewees expected “more of the same” when it comes to the CAP budget. One senior official weighed in on this by noting that:

Experience would tell us that there will be reduction. But of a moderate impact. 6...7% less over seven years. Which you can easily digest. Of course, there will be kind of external convergence operation to give more to new Member States. Which also means a reduction to those who are in the old Member States. All this would be normal to happen too. *I would be amazed if we ended up with kind of 15% or 20% reduction.* (senior EC official, 2017) (personal views)

And while Brexit was seen to put pressure on the budget and thence on the CAP, the general consensus was that this pressure was not going to be enough. Either Member States are going to put up the money or loss will be swallowed without that having much of an effect on agricultural policy. Other new priorities, such as the migration crisis or the fight against climate change, were generally also not seen as pressing enough to bring about the reduction of the CAP budget to tackle them.

Trade—another source of pressure for CAP reform that has been very salient in the past, especially during the MacSharry and Fischler reforms—was still dormant, which is not necessarily surprising given that it also did not play a significant role in negotiations leading up to the last CAP reform in 2013 (Swinbank, 2015). A senior official—when asked whether trade negotiations still create pressure to reform the CAP—illustrated the situation by replying that:

Rather the other way around [we are putting pressure on others]. More and more people are now saying “you’re always talking about WTO. We had a situation in one of the triologues [...] where one of the MEPs said “WTO, what is this? Have you ever heard of the WTO?” [This MEP] was basically saying that “come on, don’t be more Catholic than the Pope.” Americans don’t care, Indians don’t care. We are the only ones that care. (senior EC official, 2017) (personal views)

Actors

The Commission

Reflections on the role of the Commission were divided. First off, a handful of the Member States’ representatives who held pro-reformist views were sceptical of the role of the Commission overall. One reform-minded Member State representative illustrated this view—which was shared by several other reform-minded Member State functionaries—by noting that:

Reform—if we can really call it a reform, which we can’t now—idea from the DG AGRI is that “okay, we lose a little bit because of the Brexit but we try to keep [funding] at current level” which in my understanding means that the pressure is not enough. [They want to] keep everything in line, as it is [now with] direct payments. [The] structure will be the same [after reform]. [...] We might call it differently this time. It is the issue of justifying agricultural payments to public opinion. *At least, from the Commission, what I see coming from them, they are not ready to make a real overhaul of the policy.* (agricultural functionary from a smaller Western European member state, 2017) (personal views, emphasis added)

Due to the small sample size and need to protect the anonymity of the interviewed officials, generalizations are more difficult when it comes to the Commission. However, very broadly speaking and perhaps unsurprisingly, Commission’s own officials tended to see the role of the Commission positively. For example, DG AGRI’s own officials were likely to perceive both their own DG’s

performance and the Commission's performance as a whole, in particular, as progressive. Officials from DGs other than AGRI did not arrive at a consensus on the role played by DG AGRI. Some thought that they were simply protecting their turf and defending the indefensible while others, perhaps due to some esprit de corps, praised the work of DG AGRI. But assessment that rest of the Commission is more progressive than DG AGRI was not alien, even among interviewees who worked at DG AGRI themselves. As one high ranking DG AGRI official noted:

We have 20 DGs, 14 of which made written comments in our proposals [for the CAP reform]. Whatever we want to do, there are limits in what we can do here. So, in that respect, [DG] *AGRI is not as—if you want—progressive as other parts of the house*—[as the] Commissioner would like to call us. (high ranking EC official, 2018) (personal views)

The same official, however, immediately went on to emphasize that the lack of progressiveness of DG AGRI within the Commission isn't actually that severe and, furthermore, that it should be put into a wider perspective of agricultural policy making:

- But [AGRI] is still—compared to the other ministries—a force [that is going] to propose changes. And, I think, there are areas where we are underestimated. If you look at the analysis we have done, and the impacts of financial crisis [sic], it is much more advanced than other parts of the Commission. And there are parts of the house that are pretty open to new ideas. But not all parts of the house. Its normal in bureaucracies. (high ranking EC official, 2018) (personal views)

European Parliament

Consistent with past research (Roederer-Rynning, 2015), the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (COMAGRI) was seen by nearly all reform-minded officials and Member States functionaries as a force of stagnation or even as a reactionary actor that would—if it could—walk back on past reforms. This view was held so much so that one Member State functionary stated that:

The first stumbling block now is the European Parliament. They are really asking to increase the budget! (agricultural functionary from a smaller Western European member state, 2017) (personal views)

One official called the COMAGRI 'the biggest open door for lobbyists.' This official went on to illustrate the mentality of COMAGRI using Omnibus package—a series of technical improvements to CAP adopted in December 2017—negotiations as follows:

We had proposals from the Parliament to basically kill greening right away. They would simply say "this is discriminatory" or they would say "too much burden," "let's increase the threshold from 10 to 15. Why do we have different thresholds? It's an implication [to get rid of thresholds]." They would have all sorts of arguments just to water it down. They would say "farmers know best how to deal with the environment." (senior EC official, 2017) (personal views)

Interestingly, while the vast majority of interviewees perceived EP Plenary to be more progressive than the COMAGRI—particularly if they had to place these actors on a scale on a paper—this difference does not appear to materialize in a progressive policy impact and this was noted too. That is, MEPs outside the COMAGRI appear to be too apathetic towards agricultural policy to challenge whatever comes out of COMAGRI. One Member State functionary summarized that:

[The] plenary is the same [as COMAGRI]. I have never seen plenary change laws on CAP. COMAGRI is very influential. If they have the decision, plenary will accept it more or less. (agricultural functionary from a smaller Western European member state, 2017) (personal views)

There could be a number of reasons why this is so. For example, it could be the case that the MEPs who don't sit in the COMAGRI are not actually more progressive than those who do sit in the COMAGRI. In other words, perhaps COMAGRI really is representative of the views held by the Plenary. However, this theory cannot be supported with data from the interviews. Alternatively, it could be the case that the Plenary is simply apathetic towards agricultural policy and other concerns, such as party discipline, govern the behaviour of MEPs who vote in favour of COMAGRI positions in the Plenary. However, this theory does not find support either. Instead, it is the lack of capacity for independent analysis that is seen as the prime cause as to why the Plenary has been unable to challenge the COMAGRI. One high-ranking EC official explains that:

[While the Plenary has a research unit,] in terms of doing evaluation studies and analysis, they don't develop their own stuff. The best thing they do is [that] they send some money to some academics who do a cut-and-paste of an analysis that has been already done for us or for DG Research. It's not like in the US. [There,] Congress, for example has this Congressional Research Service which is bipartisan and does pretty solid analysis. It has the Congressional Budget Office. [...] They provided independent analysis that the other parts of the government didn't like. That we don't have. They don't have in the [EU] Parliament. You don't have [it] in the Council and [not] even in the Commission, despite all the attempts to create something [like that]. (high ranking EC official, 2018) (personal views)

Council

More reform-minded officials and Member State representatives were not optimistic about the Council having a positive influence either. One high-ranking EC official chose to explain agricultural ministers' sometimes seemingly irrational behaviour in Council via their short event horizon, noting that:

The Council's problem is that the average political age as farm ministers of farm ministries is what? Two years! So, why would they care about the assessment of the performance of the CAP in 2025? From a political point of view, what's the benefit of working to get out of it? The benefits that they will have to get is in the next elections. (high ranking EC official, 2018) (personal views)

One Member State official who recognized the same problem thought that:

[The] only option I see is that we have to decide this at a higher political level. This agricultural policy was designed for the 1960s. We are now in 2019 when the heads of state decide "Maybe we should do something and shift a little bit budget from agriculture policy to innovation and so on." No agricultural minister will ever [agree to have] its budget reduced. (agricultural functionary from a smaller Western European member state, 2017) (personal views; emphasis added)

However, uncertainty faced by Member States' heads of government regarding the outcome of the reshuffling of the Union's budget may make them too wary to contemplate such a move. One high-ranking EC official raised the question that 'if Germany didn't get something out of agriculture, where would they get anything?' (high ranking EC official, 2018). This is indeed a valid question in the sense that even a fully rational head of government might refuse to abandon a suboptimal policy if that policy brings about spending and thereby generates jobs and GDP in their Member State via a

spending and multiplayer effect, while alternatives might not do so as the Union's new priorities might not require money to be spent in his or her Member State.

But what about the role of individual Member States or their groupings in the Council? One Member State functionary recalled that Northern member states such as Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, and UK used to be progressive in the 1990s when:

They were all the time questioning “why do we need these direct payments? They don't make sense. Let us phase them out,” Sweden was saying. Even the Netherlands was in that camp. (agricultural functionary from a smaller Western European member state, 2017) (personal views)

However, the same functionary also made it clear that this was no longer the case in late 2010s. There had been a shift, at least in rhetoric, even among the Northern Member States already before the Ciolos Reform of 2013:

Back in 2012, nobody was questioning anything. It was just about justifying. “We should do a little bit and then we use it to justify [the budget]”. (agricultural functionary from a smaller Western European member state, 2017) (personal views)

New Member States from Central and Eastern Europe are not putting pressure to reform the CAP, but rather the contrary. Some of them, such as Poland, are reactionary in many ways, more so than some Member States usually thought to be the protectors and guardians of CAP and the special treatment of agriculture. One Member State functionary observed that:

Poland is the leader of the group of Member States who really want this agricultural policy with a lot of intervention and—how would you call this—private storage and [these] kind of things. They are all the time pushing for it. But they are really in the minority. Even France is not pushing all the time [for intervention]. Italy even less. (agricultural functionary from a smaller Western European member state, 2017) (personal views)

Southern Member States are similarly not pushing for more radical reform of the CAP. A high level EC official observed that:

In agricultural terms, you have clear division between north and south with northern countries who are more countries of consumers. I am making a kind of generalization. And you have the *southern countries who are countries of producers*. That is how they view [the] financing needs [of the CAP]. This is very different. I also think there is [a] general perception that [there are] southern [countries] who only want [money] and that they are little bit lazy. This is something that is not formulated. Everyone will say that you pass that aside [when you use] the reason, of course. But internally, I think, that it is somehow present. Of course, when you look at it now, you have France. *Even the President Macron has said that CAP cannot be touched. It has of course been supported by Spain, Portugal, Italy and some other countries.* (high level EC official, 2018) (personal views; emphasis added)

Hence, in general, AGRIFISH Council—if taken as one actor—needs to be seen as a conservative force in the CAP reform. If the Council is split into groups of Member States, then one could observe a somewhat more progressive—but not calling for a radical reform of the CAP—group of Member States from Northern Europe. This group is also known as the Stockholm Group¹⁷ and it is about to lose its

¹⁷ The core member of the Stockholm Group are UK, Sweden, Denmark and Netherlands. Germany is known to be 'attending' group meetings. (Gardner, et al., 2019, p. 326)

largest and most influential member with Brexit. New Member States from Central and Eastern Europe tend to put conservative or even reactionary pressure on the CAP reform. Southern Member States led by France tend to put overall conservative pressure on the CAP reform.

Lobbies other than agriculture

As already noted the introduction, European-level farm lobbies are not that influential when it comes to the CAP reform. Green lobbies are, however, a different story. This has been confirmed to a varying degree in many interviews. One high-ranking EC official confirms this by noting that:

There has been much more influence by the environmental groups, by the way, than [COPA-COGECA]. We listen much more [to] the environmental groups than we listen to them. First, because environmental groups [come up with real problems]. We don't listen to their [proposed solutions]. In terms of solution, they rarely come up with something—but they come up with real problems. So, at least, you know that you have to address something. (high ranking EC official, 2018) (personal views)

There are two other lobbies that could potentially put progressive pressure on the CAP reform. These are the consumers' rights and taxpayer organizations. However, seen from the DG AGRI, '[t]he association of consumers or taxpayers are the most invisible.' (high level EC official, 2018) It is as if these organizations don't care about the CAP or its cost. Their absence and its consequences are noted by several Member States functionaries too, one of whom thought that perhaps the only way to actually reduce the budget of the CAP and thereby bring about more radical reform in its content would be:

If we had an EU taxpayers' union. But we don't have [one]. In Germany, you have this taxpayers' union and they publicly take stances on budget, saying "what are you doing with our taxpayers' money and so on?" It could be the role of the [European] Parliament but they are just on the other side! They are asking for more of the taxpayers' money every year! So, I don't see them putting any pressure on DG AGRI to reform the policy. That is something that I, personally, would like [to see]. It would be a good idea to have this kind of collective NGO of EU taxpayers' associations. But it doesn't exist. *That would be the only thing that really would help us. But it is not there.* (agricultural functionary from a smaller Western European member state, 2017) (personal views)

The next interesting group and one that is not—technically speaking—a lobby but could theoretically play the role of a pro-reform actor are the agricultural economists. Unfortunately, a vast majority of interviewees who address the role of agricultural economists did not see them having much of an impact. One high-ranking official thought that the assumptions made by academic economists—and therefore also the conclusions they arrive at—are problematic. This official went on to elaborate that:

If you look at the three basic assumptions of [the] rational expectations' hypothesis, [you find that] they don't work in real life. So, we developed a whole hypothesis and we inversed [in it] – if you want. What should be the modelling assumption? Models are supposed to be [a] simplified representation of the real world. [But] we turn them upside down. We take [our] own world, as we see it in our minds, and try impose this world in reality. It doesn't always work like that. (high ranking EC official, 2018) (personal views)

Interviewees also agreed that non-agricultural industry has no impact on the CAP reform. A Member State functionary noted ‘They don’t care. When it comes to the budget, they are not really interested’ (agricultural functionary from a smaller Western European member state, 2017). A high-level EC official at DG AGRI did acknowledge that in the case of trade negotiations, non-agricultural industries have a skin in the game and they do get involved but also stated that:

[The pressure they apply] does not come through us. That comes in at the political level. Through the pressure of countries like Germany. The deal with MERCOSUR it was very strong because there were many interests in the industry. (high level EC official, 2018) (personal views)

Political-institutional arrangements

QMV

QMV was never mentioned by interviewees. While it is obvious that—as theory predicts (Tsebelis, 2002)—the adoption of QMV has made reforms easier by reducing the number of veto players, it probably didn’t come to policy-makers’ minds. This could be so because they have—by now—gotten used to it and are taking QMV and its impact for granted.

Co-decision

Co-decision, however, was mentioned by several interviewees. For example, one high-ranking EC official saw the erosion of the Commission’s power with co-decision as problematic:

I think one big institutional weakness is that now you have the co-decision. Each institution has its own weaknesses. The first weakness, on the part of the Commission, is that it has lost the negotiating power it had before—when we didn’t have co-decision. The negotiation was between the Commission and the Council. Therefore, you could narrow down both the proposal and the focus on what were the primary objectives of Member States. And you had three or four groups. You could do compromises. Now, this is gone. It’s between the Parliament and the Council. And the Commission is a potential notetaker in the second reading. Which means that it is much more ready to make compromises in the beginning. The best contribution of the Commission is making a proposal that is more rational and based on evidence. (high ranking EC official, 2018) (personal views)

Several Member State functionaries who personally did not hold agricultural exceptionalist views also shared the opinion that co-decision has put conservative and reactionary pressure on the CAP reform. One of those delegates thought that ‘it would be easier if it was only the Council that took the decision.’ However, he was quick to add that ‘[b]ut even if it was only the Council, I think [that] it would still be difficult to imagine a big reform. (agricultural functionary from a Northern European member state, 2017)

Isolation of national ministries

The hypothesis that the Member States’ agricultural ministries are isolated from rest of the Member States’ administration and from groups of societies other than farmers, was supported by several reform-minded interviewees. One Member State functionary was quite blunt when discussing the absence of radical CAP reform, saying that ‘the problem is that most Member States and even at the European level we still have a Minister of Agriculture and we still have Commissioner for agriculture’ (agricultural functionary from a smaller Western European member state, 2017). This high-ranking EC

official was equally critical of agricultural bureaucracies in Member States, observing that ‘sometimes they don’t even represent the farmers but they represent vested interest and the immobility of bureaucracies’ (high ranking EC official, 2018). A Member State functionary went on to elaborate that:

[This] is the institutional reality. I think the only solution would be that in all the Member States, ministries of agriculture would be merged with the ministries of economy or with ministries of environment. Then the political influence [of agricultural bureaucracies] would be much less. But for the moment, we still have [them]. I mean, it is questioned sometimes “why do you have ministry of agriculture for 0.5% of the GDP? Why do you need a minister for that?” For the moment we [at Member State agricultural bureaucracy] are still resisting. Is it a good idea [to resist merging]? I don’t know. But clearly, we have one political party [in interviewee’s Member State] that is getting the votes from farmers. So, they will never accept or accept easily that Ministry of Agriculture is abolished. It is their field and so on. Things can change, maybe. [...] Everyone is saying: what are you doing? We have a lot of civil servants. We have to hire them because these direct payments. Everything is very complicated—cross compliance and controls and checks. [...] Minister is looking at us: “why do we need so many civil servants for 0.5% GDP sector?” So, things are changing a little bit but political resistance is still strong. Especially political institutional [resistance]. I mean our ministry will resist, evidentially, like organizations resist against their own disappearance. (agricultural functionary from a smaller Western European member state, 2017) (personal views)

Although some of the Member States’ delegates—including the previously quoted one—extended their criticism to DG AGRI too, the overall support for extending the hypothesis to cover the DG AGRI was mixed among reform-minded interviewees. As could be expected, some of that opposition came from DG AGRI’s own officials¹⁸. However, some reform-minded Member State representatives also omitted mentioning DG AGRI in this context.

Budgetary sequencing and bargaining

A number of interviewees implied that using past budget allocation as starting point of the negotiations for the new period is part of the problem. For example, one senior EC official explained that as negotiator:

You have budgets of the past. You wouldn’t like to reduce the budget or wouldn’t like to lose the budget you’re defending. So, this is another aspect that plays a role. There is a certain orthodoxy in the political discussion. That has to do, in my opinion, with the fact that when you try to restructure budget – which means moving money around from one purpose to another [then] you also move money around

¹⁸ When prompted to explain why do they think that DG AGRI is more progressive than, say, national ministries of agriculture, a high ranking DG AGRI official went on explain that:

we have a filter that helps us, which is the impact assessment that has to go through interservice [consultations]. [The] same thing applies to the proposal. So, you don’t have DG AGRI starts a proposal [and completes it alone too] but more and more the other DGs play a major role. Which is not something you have in agricultural ministries [in Member States]. Because the agricultural ministries get the money from a decision and then they do whatever they want with it. I don’t know how many of those [Member States’ ministries of agriculture] would accept to have the environmental ministries [getting involved] or have the strategic inter-service [as we do]? (high ranking EC official, 2018) (personal views)

between beneficiaries. The beneficiaries losing the money will scream and make a hell of a noise. And those who receive it will say “thank you very much” and remain silent. So, as soon as you start doing these big structural changes—economically you may very well justify those [changes]—, it leads to an enormous difficulty, politically speaking. (senior EC official, 2017) (personal views; emphasis added)

The same official also continued on to elaborate on the problem of separating MFF negotiations from the substance of the CAP reform:

[This results in the EU having a] strange basis for policy making which is that we first fix budget and then we decide on how to distribute it. Normally, you would ask in private life “how much does it take to do this or that?” and then you would say “okay, now I will raise the money for it” but I don’t first say, when I am buying a car, that “I’ve got 50,000 now and I will now buy whatever car”. I think this is a bit what happens [with CAP]. “How do I get as much money as possible?” and then “I will see how I will use it.” Now, it’s a caricature, but *sequencing is not necessarily logical*. (senior EC official, 2017) (emphasis added; personal views)

This political institutional arrangement for budget negotiations creates a high level of uncertainty, especially for Member State representatives—both in the AGRIFISH Council and in the European Council—should they entertain the idea of more radical reform. As one Member State functionary pointed out:

If we now say – which in my personal view would be a more intelligent use of agricultural policy budget at the EU level – [that] we shift money to, I don’t know, innovation, migration, security then all the governments would say “I want to keep my share of the cake.” But we cannot guarantee this because France will get, I don’t know, 10 or 20 billion out of agricultural policy but if we shift the money to migration then there is no certainty [that France will continue to get it]. Then they will say “I will reflect a little bit on it.” (agricultural functionary from a smaller Western European member state, 2017) (personal views)

Ensuing uncertainty creates a very strong status quo bias. And the only viable way right now to overcome this is with:

A decision from the higher level. The heads of states have to say [at] one point of time, “it is enough, we do a real policy reform and we accept to lose some budget.” And that is only heads of states who could say something like that. (agricultural functionary from a smaller Western European member state, 2017) (personal views)

Conclusions

Using 48 roughly hour-long qualitative elite interviews with top officials of the European Commission (EC), General Secretariat of the Council (GSC) and Member States’ representatives in the Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA), this paper presented an insider’s perspective on the political economy of the CAP reform.

Some pressures that have influenced CAP reform in the past—namely budgetary concerns, trade, enlargement, food safety, and food prices (both level and volatility)—are not very relevant when it comes to the ongoing CAP post2020 reform. The need to fight against climate change does put some

pressure on the reform, but interviewees agree that this pressure is not enough to induce radical rethinking of the CAP and its share in the EU's budget.

When it comes to the actors, views on the role of the Commission—both DG AGRI and the rest of the Commission—are mixed. While generalizations are difficult¹⁹, it can be observed that the Commission is, as a whole, more progressive than a vast majority of the Member States in the Council and considerably more progressive than the COMAGRI of the EP. Nevertheless, DG AGRI was perceived to be more conservative than other services. Internal consultation procedure with other DGs was seen by some as the reason why the Commission is overall more progressive than co-legislators. Other services—which are one of the most progressive actors—put pressure on DG AGRI within Commission. This stands in sharp contrast with the assessment given to the European Parliament, which was perceived to be the 'stumbling block' and 'biggest open door for lobbyists.' Interestingly, while the EP's Plenary could have been expected to be much more progressive than the COMAGRI, this was not confirmed. Lack of independent research capacity by the Plenary was seen by some interviewees as the reason as to why the Plenary is unable to challenge COMAGRI. As an actor, the AGRIFISH Council is also a conservative force. If the Council is broken down to Member States or their groups, then southern and eastern Member States would be conservative forces. Some, such as Poland, could be even reactionary. Only northern Member States, such as Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, and the UK, can be seen as reformist actors. However, even their commitment to radical reform of the CAP is questionable. Of lobbies, green lobbies are the only actor putting some reformist pressure on policy making. Consumers, taxpayers, and non-agricultural industries are absent as actors while academic economists are not seen to have much influence.

In terms of political-institutional arrangements, co-decision was perceived to have a conservative impact as it reduced progressive and increased conservative actors' strength. It also emerged through the interviews that isolation of Member State agricultural ministries from rest of the Member States' administration and from groups of society other than farmers has a strong conservative effect on the CAP reform. Another political-institutional arrangement that plays a crucial role is the way budgetary negotiations are held in the EU. Firstly, budget negotiations are separated from the CAP reform substance negotiations, resulting in an illogical sequencing. Secondly, always using existing outlays and distribution as a starting point of negotiations results in very strong status quo bias because shifting money to other priorities would create a lot of uncertainty regarding national envelopes.

¹⁹ Difficult due to small sample size and the need to protect the anonymity of the interviewees.

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Annex 1: Interview questions

Most of the interviewees were asked some variation²⁰ of following questions:

1. What is your own background and how long have you been involved in agricultural policy making?
2. Imagine that you're being hired as consultant and you would have to come up with a blue print for agricultural policy. In your personal opinion, what is the ideal agricultural policy for the EU (if there should be one)?²¹
3. What are the main obstacles in achieving this ideal policy or goals? Which pressures, actors or political institutional arrangements stand in the way?
4. Have you heard of the 'bond scheme' proposal for CAP reform?²²
 - What do you think about this proposal?
5. Many economists are very critical of the CAP and its internal contradictions. Why is this? What are economists missing?
6. What are the threats to the current CAP and its funding?
7. Who lobbies when it comes to agricultural policy reform?
 - How influential is one or another lobby group?
8. Can you please help me to place major players such as Member States and EU institutions on these three scales:
 - I. The first scale measures market orientation, more broadly defined as concern with efficiency and taxpayer money use.
 - II. The second scale tries to see how much does the player want to make agricultural policy about environmentalism. When a player does not want to focus agricultural policy on environmentalism, there could be several reasons for it and it does not mean that they are not concerned with environment—everyone is concerned with environment—it just means that they wouldn't like agricultural policy to be the

²⁰ Not all interviewees were asked all questions. Firstly, list of questions were modified and reduced based on the feedback and outcome of the first five interviews. Time constraint also prevented asking the full list from all interviewees. While average length of interview was 1h6min and median length 1h7min, shortest interview was just 19 minutes long and standard deviation of interviews was 23 minutes. A number of those very short interviews—all of them with Member State representatives—were of such a length because they had to be cut short due to unexpected time constraints mentioned by the interviewee just before or during the interview. Usually they had new meeting unexpectedly coming up or something like that. The shortest interview where the interviewee actually answered all of the questions asked fully took 30 minutes. While time constraint was the main reason why some questions were skipped, there were others too. If interviewees who seemed hostile to any progress/liberal reform idea of the CAP—as was possible to gauge from their answer to 'ideal CAP' question—then bond scheme question was not brought up. Instead, a 5th question was used to work around the problem of presenting the previous question to the interviewee. "Threats" that these interviewees identified to the current CAP in their answers to this question can be considered to be pressures, actors, or political institutional arrangements that can bring potential change.

²¹ This served several purposes. Firstly, it was to see whether any of the respondents would actually like radically reform of the CAP without me putting any ideas in their head.

²² If an interviewee had not heard of the 'bond scheme' proposal from Swinbank & Tangermann (2000) and if the interviewee didn't seem overtly hostile towards reform, then I gave a brief and as neutral as possible summary about the proposal.

vehicle to pursue environmental goals. They may even support taking money away from CAP and using it for agricultural policy. Alternatively, they may argue that CAP money should be for farmers.

- III. The last scale tries to measure how much are different players themselves influenced by agricultural lobbies, whether supranational or national.

Annex 2: List of interviewees

	first name	last name	Job title or recent job title of the interviewee at the time of interview	institution
Mr.	Gonçalo	Almeida Simões	SCA Spokesperson, Agriculture Counsellor	PT PERM REP
Mr.	Felice	Assenza	SCA Spokesperson,	IT MIN AGRI
Mr.	Alois	Bauer	SCA Spokesperson, Deputy Director General for EU Policy, International Cooperation and Fisheries in the Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture	DE MIN AGRI
Mrs.	María Angeles	Benítez Salas	Deputy Director-General for Agriculture and Rural Development	COM DG AGRI
Mr.	Péter László	Benkő	SCA Spokesperson, Head of Agriculture Unit	HU PERM REP
Mr.	Søren	Bisgaard	Attaché	DK PERM REP
Dr.	Petr	Blizkovsky	Director of Directorate 1 - Agriculture (SCA - Special Committee on Agriculture) and Social Policy	GSC DGB
Mr.	Ángel	Boixareu	Director-General of Directorate-General B - Agriculture, Fisheries, Social Affairs and Health	GSC DGB
Ms.	Stephanie	Borg Mamo	SCA Spokesperson, Technical Attaché	MT PERM REP
Ms.	Effrosyni	Bousiou	SCA Spokesperson, Agricultural Counsellor, Head of Unit of the Agricultural Sector	EL PERM REP
Ms.	Marina	Brakalova	SCA Spokesperson, Head of Unit, Counsellor	BG PERM REP
Mr.	Breffni	Carpenter	Joint SCA spokesperson, Agriculture Counsellor	IE PERM REP
Mr.	Polys-Andreas	Constantinou	SCA Spokesperson, Agricultural Counsellor	CY PERM REP
Dr.	Humberto	Delgado Rosa	Director of Natural Capital	COM DG ENVI
Mr.	Mike	Dowell	First Secretary	UK PERM REP
Dr.	Mihail	Dumitru	Deputy Director-General for Agriculture and Rural Development	COM DG AGRI
Mr.	Gerfried	Gruber	Deputy SCA spokesperson, Counsellor and Head of Unit	AT PERM REP
Dr.	Anastassios	Haniotis	Director of Strategy, simplification and policy analysis Directorate	COM DG AGRI
Mr.	Matej	Hudec	SCA Spokesperson, Head of the Agricultural Policy section	SK PERM REP
Dr.	Achim	Irimescu	SCA Spokesperson, Minister Plenipotentiary, Head of Unit	RO PERM REP
Ms.	Virginie	Jorissen	SCA Spokesperson, Delegate for European Agricultural Affairs	FR PERM REP
Mr.	Marc	Kreis	Agricultural Counsellor	LU PERM REP

Mr.	Fredrik	Langdal	SCA Spokesperson, Agricultural Counsellor	SE PERM REP
Mr.	Aivars	Lapins	SCA Spokesperson, Counsellor	LV PERM REP
Mr.	Damiano	Li Vecchi	Agricultural Attaché	IT PERM REP
Mr.	Pieter	Lietaer	Deputy SCA spokesperson, Agricultural Attaché, Flemish Region	BE PERM REP
Mr.	Juan José	López Lledó	Head of Unit of CAP and structural policies	COM DG BUDG
Dr.	Rudi	Moegele	Deputy Director-General for Agriculture and Rural Development	COM DG AGRI
Mr.	Rory	O'Donnell	SCA Spokesperson, Agriculture Counsellor	UK PERM REP
Mr.	Jesper Wulff	Pedersen	SCA Spokesperson, in the Ministry of Environment and Food	DK MIN AGRI
Mr.	Jakša	Petrić	First Secretary	HR PERM REP
Mr.	Miloš	Pinkas	SCA Spokesperson, Head of Unit Agriculture and Environment	CZ PERM REP
Mr.	Osmo	Rönty	Agricultural Counsellor	FI PERM REP
Mr.	Jorge	Sainz Elías	SCA Spokesperson, Counsellor, chief of agriculture, fisheries and food	ES PERM REP
Mr.	Zoltan	Samogyi	Head of Unit of Agriculture, Fisheries, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Market Access, Biotechnology	COM DG TRADE
Mr.	Frank	Schmit	SCA Spokesperson, Agricultural Counsellor	LU PERM REP
Mr.	Peeter	Seestrand	SCA Spokesperson, Director of Division, Special Counsellor	EE PERM REP
Dr.	Jan G.	Sevenster	SCA Spokesperson,	NL MIN AGRI
Mr.	Marc	Sévérac	Head of European Union Bureau	FR MIN AGRI
Mr.	Stefano	Soro	Head of Unit of Biotechnology and Food Supply Chain	COM DG GROW
Mr.	Jan	Srb	Third Secretary	CZ PERM REP
Mr.	Siim	Tiidemann	Deputy SCA spokesperson, Counsellor	EE PERM REP
Mr.	Kari	Valonen	SCA Spokesperson, Head of EU Coordination, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	FI MIN AGRI
Mr.	Nico	Van Opstal	Agricultural Counsellor	NL PERM REP
Ms.	Alicia	Villauriz Iglesias	Agricultural Counsellor	ES PERM REP
Ms.	Simona	Vrevc	SCA Spokesperson, EU Coordination and International Affairs Department, Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Food	SI MIN AGRI
Dr.	Jürgen	Weis	Deputy SCA spokesperson, Head of Unit	DE PERM REP
Ms.	Maša	Žagar	Deputy SCA spokesperson, Attaché for agriculture	SI PERM REP

IV.