

POSITION OF THE FOUR MOTORS FOR EUROPE ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S GENERATIONAL RENEWAL STRATEGY FOR THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

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The European Commission presented its “*Strategy for Generational Renewal in Agriculture*” on 21 October 2025 establishing a roadmap to support young farmers and attract new generations to secure Europe’s food, agricultural, and rural future. This strategy addresses the critical challenges of ageing farming population, rural depopulation, economic and environmental challenges, with only 12% of European farmers under 40 years of age.

The Four Motors for Europe recognise generational renewal as a major structural challenge across our territories, particularly in disadvantaged areas, like mountain areas, where agriculture remains essential for economic vitality, environmental and cultural heritage, food security and sovereignty. The Four Motors therefore emphasise the need for territorially differentiated approaches that strengthen the attractiveness of agricultural professions while ensuring their long-term sustainability. This ambition echoes the calls of the European association Euromontana¹.

The Four Motors for Europe welcome the Strategy and present their key positions below.

1. Positive assessment of the overall framework and objectives

The Four Motors for Europe strongly welcome the Strategy’s clear objectives and targeted actions particularly during the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) transitional phase and Strategic Plan implementation. The ambition to double young and new farmers to 24% by 2040 and allocate at least 6% of agricultural spending to generational renewal marks significant progress.

The Strategy’s cross-cutting, system-wide approach is particularly appreciated, as it addresses the lack of generational renewal as a structural challenge, not merely a sectoral one. The proposed measures to improve access to capital for young entrants are crucial, especially in investment-intensive sectors.

Equally important is the creation of a “welcome package” under the CAP with grants of up to EUR 300,000, a measure that is more ambitious than current schemes. The requirement for Member States to develop national strategies by 2028 and ensure regular monitoring could strengthen policy coherence and coordination, helping to address key governance issues such as agricultural pensions and the fiscal treatment of start-up grants. Lastly, the increase in aid intensity to 85% and the involvement of the European Investment Bank are positive steps towards financial instruments that are better tailored to the needs of the new generation of farmers.

2. Strengthening investment in generational renewal

Although the strategy sends out an important signal, its effectiveness depends on future budgetary decisions within the multiannual financial framework (MFF) due to its non-binding nature. The Four Motors for Europe express concern about trends toward recentralization, which could weaken the responsiveness of territorial policy and undermine the adaptation of measures to regional circumstances.

The next MFF must maintain a strong, territorially responsive CAP balancing environmental, economic, and social objectives. Priorities include simplified funding access for young and new entrants; mentoring and knowledge-transfer networks; lifelong learning for the acquisition of technical and business skills integrating ecological and digital transitions; support for transferors to facilitate farm handovers.

¹ Euromontana’s position on the European Commission’s Strategy for Generational Renewal in the Agricultural Sector, July 2025.

3. Access to land

Access to land remains one of the main obstacles to generational renewal. In mountain areas, where the risk of land abandonment is three times higher than the average, this threatens the traditional agricultural model for these territories.

The European Farmland Observatory represents a valuable step towards more transparent and accurate data on land availability and use. However, competition from other land uses, such as infrastructure development, urban expansion, or renewable energy projects, aggravates the problem and undermines the EU's food sovereignty. Without specific mechanisms to manage this competition, the Observatory alone will prove insufficient.

The Four Motors for Europe therefore advocate for public and private land mediation mechanisms, such as land banks, temporary leasing schemes, and territorial stewardship initiatives, to ensure fair, attractive, and sustainable farmland access.

The Soil Monitoring and Resilience Directive supports these goals through land protection measures and should be fully implemented to reduce land consumption and achieve healthy soils by 2050.

4. Fiscal reforms to support young farmers

The Four Motors for Europe call for the harmonisation of national fiscal frameworks to avoid Member State competition while supporting farm transfers, young and new entrants, and make the fiscal burden more manageable. Proposals include:

- Tax reductions or exemptions for farm transfers or inheritances that enable young people to take over farms.
- Exemption from taxation of EU “welcome package” grants.
- Progressive tax regimes during the first years of activity to support project consolidation.
- Fiscal incentives for retired farmers or companies transferring land or equipment to new entrants.
- Harmonisation of fiscal treatment of CAP aid and investments across the EU to avoid territorial disparities.

5. Rural development and living conditions

The Four Motors for Europe share the Commission's vision that generational renewal requires a broader rural development framework. Agricultural measures alone are insufficient, particularly in disadvantaged areas facing natural constraints exacerbated by climate change. Rural areas must offer attractive and equitable living conditions to retain young people and attract newcomers.

Greater coherence and complementarity are needed between the CAP, cohesion funds, and digitalisation, employment, and housing policies. Key recommendations include:

- Integrated territorial strategies linking agricultural activity, basic services, innovation, and environmental sustainability.
- Improved infrastructure in the areas of digitization, transportation, and renewable energy to bridge the gap between rural and urban areas.
- Rural housing programmes and incentives for young people and newcomers to settle or remain in rural areas.
- Strengthened LEADER local development initiatives, driving social innovation and participatory governance.
- Positive narrative highlighting successful farm transfers.

Funding should primarily target young and new farmers, especially family farms rooted in their territories, as they are among those most in need within the agricultural sector.

Policy instruments should be tailored to the size and structure of family farms, ensuring that policies are scale-neutral and that small and medium-sized farms receive additional support. The socio-economic and environmental value of family farming—which contributes to rural cohesion and the sustainable natural resources management— should be fully recognized. Specific measures are needed to secure generational renewal and the long-term viability of these farms.

6. Removing barriers and promoting new models of agricultural enterprise

The Four Motors for Europe propose regulatory measures to eliminate barriers and create supportive conditions to foster innovation, and ensure farmers to make a living from their work and earn decent income:

- Adapt EU, national, and regional regulations for gradual farm establishment compatible with complementary incomes (e.g. agricultural work for third parties, provision of ecosystem services).
- Harmonise EU regulatory frameworks to reduce Member States disparities.
- Promote paradigm shift recognising farmers as custodians of food sovereignty, territory, environment, and culture.
- Integrate agriculture, forestry, and environmental management, given that these occur in the same physical space and rely on the same local actors - farmers, livestock holders, and forest owners.
- Reduce administrative burdens and provide personalised guidance and support for young farmers' projects.
- Support multifunctional agriculture (agritourism, direct sales of products, other services) for income diversification.
- Promote the role of multifunctional agricultural models for social inclusion of disadvantaged people.
- Implement policies to boost the presence of women in the agri-food sector, particularly in leadership and management positions.

The Four Motors for Europe envision rural areas as spaces of progress and opportunity, capable of fostering well-being, innovation, and quality of life. They reaffirm their commitment to territorial cooperation, sharing experiences, best practices, and innovative solutions that promote generational renewal.

Europe's future depends on building an agricultural model that is more resilient, innovative, sustainable, and socially inclusive. The Four Motors for Europe emphasise their commitment to leadership and cooperation to secure policies and financial instruments that support farmers in making a living from their work, strengthen rural territories, and revitalize dynamic rural communities as pillars of prosperity across Europe.