

ECA: Commission Should Dig Deeper to Fight Fraud in Agricultural Spending

News

Thomas Wahl

In its [Special Report 14/2022](#) (published on 4 July 2022), the European Court of Auditors (ECA) examined different patterns of fraud in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the appropriateness of the Commission's responses to the fraud risks in agricultural spending. CAP is the largest component of expenditure under the EU budget. The 27 EU Member States made direct payments of €38.5 billion on average per year in 2018-2020 to this sector.

The report found that the Commission has responded to instances of fraud in CAP spending, but was not sufficiently proactive in addressing the impact of the risk of illegal land grabbing on CAP payments, in monitoring Member States' anti-fraud measures, and in exploiting the potential of new technologies.

The report presented an overview of fraud risks affecting the CAP, which range from risks linked to beneficiaries concealing breaches of eligibility conditions, the complexity of the financed measures to illegal forms of "land grabbing".

Regarding the use of new technologies, the report acknowledged that the Commission has made several efforts in promoting new technologies, such as the use of satellite images for checks and the development of its own risk-scoring tool Arachne; however, Member States have taken up these technologies at a low pace. Artificial intelligence and big data have potential in fighting fraud but Member States face challenges in seizing these opportunities.

The ECA recommends to the Commission actions to deepen its insight of fraud risks and anti-fraud measures and to subsequently act on its assessment. Furthermore, the Commission should increase its role in promoting new technologies for preventing and detecting fraud.

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