

# Monitoring farmland biodiversity across Europe: It could cost less than you think

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How can we monitor Europe-wide farmland biodiversity so that it makes sense to farmers, is ecologically credible and scientifically sound and can be implemented for a reasonable price? Two new studies answer these questions.

First, stakeholders were asked, which indicators provided best "value for money" for their purpose. Habitat, plant species and farm management indicators ranked highest. Wild bees, earthworms and spiders as important providers of ecosystem services came next. Together they form a minimum set of indicators which provides non-redundant information and which can make dominant changes in farmland biodiversity visible.

Researchers from the FP7 funded EU projects "Biodiversity Indicators for European Farming Systems (BioBio)" and "Building the European Biodiversity Observation Network (EU BON)", then developed cost estimates for nine [monitoring](#) scenarios and the authors conclude that a continent-wide farmland biodiversity monitoring scheme would require only a modest share of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) budget (2014-2020).

Cost assessments showed that the farmland biodiversity monitoring scenarios require 0.01% - 0.74% of the total CAP budget and 0.04% - 2.48% of the CAP budget specifically allocated to environmental targets. With 30% of the CAP devoted to environmental targets (more than 120 billion EURO), investing in a monitoring process seems a logical choice

given these results. The researchers provide a framework for individual countries to start [farmland biodiversity](#) monitoring, building towards a coherent European picture.

The studies were published in the *Journal of Applied Ecology* and the *Journal of Environmental Management*.

"Despite scientific proof that monitoring increases the (cost) efficiency of policy measures, monitoring rarely gets included in policy programme budgets. We identified that the cost are not as high as feared. To further facilitate implementation, the study provides stepping stones to build a European monitoring scheme, offering a choice in indicators and using regions as a unit of trend analysis," explains Dr. Ilse Geijzenorffer, the lead author of the *Journal of Applied Ecology* paper.

**More information:** Ilse R. Geijzenorffer et al. How much would it cost to monitor farmland biodiversity in Europe?, *Journal of Applied Ecology* (2015). [DOI: 10.1111/1365-2664.12552](https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.12552)

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