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# 3.5 Training farmers on Environmental, climate and other management commitments

## Rationale

Society but also the political agenda, e.g. the Farm2Fork and the Biodiversity strategy, put a strong focus on environmental protection and climate change mitigation measures in agriculture. The Austrian CAP Strategic Plan strives to support the achievement of these goals through different actions. One of them are the voluntary environmental, climate and other management commitments (Art. 70, EU Regulation 2115/2021).

Farmers receive payments if they voluntarily comply with one or more of the measures (cf. "Solution"). Some of those measures come along with a training requirement related to the content of the respective measure. So if they have to complete the trainings, which are part of the participation requirement of the respective measure, they receive all payments foreseen for the measure, otherwise the participating farmer will face sanctions. On the other hand, the amount of the payments for participating in this measure could have been increased based on the mandatory training requirement.

The aim of the mandatory trainings is to enable farmers to implement the management requirements of the respective measure correctly and properly, and to use state of the art knowledge taking into consideration applied research and expert advisory services, thereby contributing as much as possible to the achievement of the measure's objectives.



### Keywords

Trainings for farmers, Trainings as an instrument to increase direct CAP payments, Biodiversity and climate mitigation measures



### Potential users

Managing Authorities, Training providers



### Country

Austria

Training and knowledge exchange



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## Solution

The **legal (regulatory) basis/framework** for the measures is:

- Art. 70 of EU regulation 2115/2021 -> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02021R2115-20230101>
- § 6c (2) number 4 of Marktordnungsgesetz 2021 -> <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20005399>
- Austrian CAP Strategic Plan Chapter 5.3 „ENVCLIM(70) - Umwelt-, Klima- und andere Bewirtschaftungsverpflichtungen“ -> <https://info.bml.gv.at/themen/landwirtschaft/gemeinsame-agrarpolitik-foerderungen/nationaler-strategieplan/gsp-genehmigung.html>
- Sonderrichtlinie des Bundesministers für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Regionen und Wasserwirtschaft für das Österreichische Programm zur Förderung einer umweltgerechten, extensiven und den natürlichen Lebensraum schützenden Landwirtschaft -> <https://info.bml.gv.at/themen/landwirtschaft/gemeinsame-agrarpolitik-foerderungen/nationaler-strategieplan/sonderrichtlinien-2023-2027/agrarumweltprogramm-oepul-ab-2023-inklusive-oekoregelungen.html>

The **measures** for which farmers can receive additional payments in the context of environmental, climate and other management commitments are:

- 70 – 01 Environmentally sound and biodiversity-promoting management
- 70 – 02 Organic farming
- 70 – 03 Limitation yield-increasing inputs
- 70 – 14 Preventive groundwater protection on arable lands
- 70 – 15 Humus preservation and soil protection on grassland eligible for conversion

**Mandatory trainings** for farmers for each measure include:

- Biodiversity training (3h) for the measure “Environmentally sound and biodiversity-promoting management”
- Biodiversity training (3h) and Organic management training (5h) for the measure “Organic farming”
- Adapted nitrogen fertilization and frequency of use in grassland training (3h) for the measure “Limitation yield-increasing inputs”
- Reduction of soil erosion and nutrient losses training (10h) for the measure “Preventive groundwater protection on arable lands”
- Fertilization planning and utilization methods taking into account the concept of graded meadow cultivation training (5h) for the measure “Humus preservation an soil protection on grassland eligible for conversion”

Farmers who participate in one of the previous listed AECMs with mandatory training requirements need to provide proof of completion of the training associated to the respective measure. Except for the measure “Preventive groundwater protection on arable lands”, the proof must be submitted by the end of 2025. For the groundwater measure proof can be delivered until the end of 2026.

**Implementation (focus here exclusively on training measure):**

- Participation in one of the measures above is voluntary for the farmer under the 2nd pillar of the CAP; the measures compensate farmers for lost revenue and additional costs they incur due to compliance to the measure(s) (so also for lost revenues and additional costs due to participation in the required training)The eligibility requirements for trainings allows farmers to claim a top-up on the payments

- The eligibility requirements for trainings generates a higher amount of payments
- If the farmer fails to provide proof of sufficient training hours in due time (see above) he will be sanctioned in the size of the adjudged payment.
- Trainings are recognized as eligible for the premium of the measure only if they have been attended with a training provider recognized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management as appropriate training provider

## In practice...

The training provider:

- needs to obtain the recognition as a training provider by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management (inter alia justification of competence in provision of training in field of agriculture, environment, climate, etc. as well as willingness to submit data on participants towards AMA, i.e. the paying agency, for administrative controls)
- prepares the course concept (detailed syllabus) for the different course units
- the recognition of hours to be awarded for the course is done in consultation with an expert of the Chambers of Agriculture or an expert of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management; there is no formal certification procedure for the course syllabus, however the training providers are expected to closely coordinate with the experts aforementioned
- the format of the courses can vary and be defined by the training providers; available formats vary from classroom courses but also to topic-specific field days/excursions, webinars, online courses etc.
- after completion of the training the training provider will issue a course certificate to the farmer; the certificate has no limit of valability
- the training provider is also responsible for transferring the complete lists of all course participants to the paying agency with the corresponding training measures finished for using them in administrative controls; three deadlines have been agreed upon for this purpose between the paying agency, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management and the training providers

In addition to the payment for farmers participation in previously mentioned AECMs training provider receive subsidies for course participants in possession of a farm ID. Training providers who are in the position to offer subsidized courses (with reduced participation fees) will display on their website, in their course catalogues etc. the price of the non-subsidized course as well as the price of the subsidized course including the eligibility criteria for becoming a beneficiary of the subsidy.

The farmer:

- Applies for AECM with training requirement in his single aid application and therefore commits himself to consume at least the amount of training foreseen in measure requirements (see list above)
- Receives the information from an accredited training provider about the trainings that can be used for fulfilling the training requirements as well as course offers or searches for this information himself/herself. The information is found at specific training providers and is not centralized.

- Registers for the cours(es).  
Courses are completely independent of funding or funding approval for a measure; the course participation does not have to match the funding start or end date for the measure (has to take place between 1.1.2022 and 31.12.2025/2026) ; the payments for the measure are done on an annual basis independent of the course attendance; however if the farmer legally participates in an AECM with training requirements but fails to fulfill the foreseen minimum amount of training hours until the deadline (see above) the farmer is penalized; a course can be credited only once for one measure.

## Practical implications for replicability

Under the CAP Regulation 2023-2027 the EU Commission mandates Austria to have an administrative check in addition to the on the spot checks for the training courses. This means that 100% of farms, which receive the top-up of the measure, should be checked for compliance with the completion of the necessary training courses.

For this, the paying agency has created a databased where all checks can be completed automatically. Certified training providers are required to upload the data of all participants who have graduated the courses at three different points in time (deadlines).

## Benefits

- For farmers: receive new/updated knowledge for biodiversity and environmental protection but also on how to comply with the criteria of funded measures.
- For farmers: higher amount of payment for respective measure compared to the same measure but without training requirement.
- For society: well-educated farmers who contribute to the objectives of environmental protection measures.
- For education providers: additional frequency and points of contact with farmers.
- For managing authorities: better fulfillment of CAP indicators.

### Further information

- The measure is funded from CAP funds and about 2.800 farmers attended the trainings in 2022 with the Austrian Rural Training Institute (LFI).
- <https://www.ama.at/fachliche-informationen/oepul/formulare-merkblaetter>
- <https://info.bml.gv.at/themen/landwirtschaft/gemeinsame-agrarpolitik-foerderungen/nationaler-strategieplan/gsp-genehmigung.html>
- <https://oe.lfi.at/weiterbildungen-%C3%B6pul-2023+2500+2673509>

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