

The failure of the Common Agricultural Policy of 2014-2020 to green European agriculture and the influence of lobby groups

A study into the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy and how farmer lobby groups influence sustainable agriculture policies

Abstract

When Commission-Juncker went into office in 2014 the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union went into effect. The CAP was introduced in 1962 with the goal to provide the EU with a stable food supply. Over the years, the CAP became bigger and more complicated, moving away from a production-oriented policy, policies on modernization and quota were implemented. In recent years, the CAP has been increasingly criticized for being too complicated and being too unproductive. The CAP of 2014 was announced as revolutionary in its ambitions to make European agriculture greener and more sustainable. In the end, none of these ambitions were met, and the situation even got worse in many parts of the European Union. When this CAP was proposed its ambitions were high, but they were watered down by big farmer lobby groups and agro-industrial players in the European Union, leading to a CAP that was not effective. Using a systematic literature review and document analysis this paper explores how lobby groups work and their impact on policy making in the European Union.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AGRIFISH	Agriculture and Fisheries Council
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CEU	Council of the European Union
COGECA	General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives
COMAGRI	Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development
COPA	Committee of Professional Agricultural Organizations
EFA	Ecological Focus Area
ECA	European Court of Auditors
EC	European Commission
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
POP	Plattelandsontwikkelingsprogramma

1. Introduction

1.1 Background information and context

“The 100 billion euros of CAP funds attributed during the period 2014-2020 to climate action had little impact on agricultural emissions” is what a report concluded, published by the European Court of Auditors (2021, p. 4). Around 26 percent of the global greenhouse emissions come from food production. For the EU this number is a little more than 10 percent of the greenhouse gas emissions, from which nearly 70 percent come from the animal sector (European Court of Auditors, 2021).

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the agricultural policy of the European Union, it was founded in 1962 to ensure a stable supply of affordable food and ensure that European Union farmers could make a reasonable living. Over the years, the CAP continued to grow bigger on more different aspects, slowly moving away from a production-oriented policy. This was due to the fact that the old system favored overproduction, leading to the so-called “wine lakes” and “butter mountains”. Over the years, policies on modernization, quota and environment were implemented. When the new European Commission (Commission-Juncker) took office in November 2014 they added the greening of EU farmland as an important goal. The reform of 2014 was ambitious: there had to be less intensive production, more nature and more biodiversity in Europe’s agriculture. Above all that, greenhouse gas emissions had to be reduced drastically (European Council, 2022). In 2021 the European Union spent around 55 billion euros on agricultural policies, making it the biggest part of the EU-budget (33.1%) (European Parliament, 2021).

A lot has been written on the CAP of 2014, some scholars already criticized it from the year it started, some scholars criticized it after the effects of it were clear in 2021. According to Pe’er et al. (2014) the CAP would not be able to increase biodiversity levels in the EU. They argued that agricultural expansion and intensification are an important factor in the loss of biodiversity globally. Later, Pe’er declared that member states of the EU were given too much freedom to allocate their own budget. This flexibility often led to big farmers receiving the biggest part of the budget, this flexibility eventually led to misuse (Van Doorn & Smidt, 2017; Fridays for Future, 2020). This flexibility was a result due, among other things, to a strong lobbying

campaign that was set up after the 2014 CAP proposition, which was spearheaded by major European agro-industrial players and farmers' organizations (Erjavec & Erjavec, 2015).

1.2 Research problem

The entire Dutch surface makes up about 4,2 million hectares, a little more than half of this is designed for agriculture. When inland water (lakes and rivers) and sea is not taken into account agriculture even makes up for 66 percent of the Dutch surface (CBS, 2020). Because agriculture plays such a big role in Dutch society, talking about agricultural shrinking has always been a sensitive subject, in recent years it even led to the entry of a farmers' party in the parliament. The party called BoerenBurgerBeweging was created to stand up for the interests of farmers, while it only got one seat in the elections it has shown a sharp increase in the latest polls of 2022 (EenVandaag, n.d.). While making up around 4 percent of the Dutch economy, agriculture has a high impact on some issues that Dutch society has to deal with. Dutch biodiversity rates have been declining for a long time, agriculture and food processing have a major impact on these issues. This is mainly because of nitrogen emissions; Dutch agriculture emits around sixty percent of the total amount of Dutch nitrogen emissions. Nitrogen is harmful for the environment if too many ends up in the soil or water, it enriches the ground which leads to certain plants to overgrow. As a result, different animals, such as butterflies and birds disappear (Milieu Centraal, n.d.; Wageningen University, n.d.). In addition, agriculture is responsible for 25,6 percent of the total greenhouse gas emissions in the Netherlands. The majority of these emissions, around 68 percent, are created by cattle breeding and the usage of manure. This is because of methane, which arises in the digestive tract of cattle in particular. Also, in areas where pigs are kept, methane is (mainly) produced in the stable and at the manure storage (CBS, n.d.). In addition, the Netherlands is a forerunner in intensive livestock farming. When looking at the number of livestock per total land area, the Netherlands has the highest number worldwide. This means that the Netherlands emits a disproportionate amount of greenhouse gas in agriculture compared to the total land area (United Nations, n.d.; Opromolla, 2019).

The Netherlands received 900 million euros from the CAP in 2020, of which more than 700 million went to direct income support (pillar one) and the rest went to rural development (pillar 2) (Baayen et al., 2021). The first CAP pillar consists of smaller subsidy pots, to help it shape the agricultural products market and give extra subsidies to farmers who take greening measures. The second pillar, which has the objective of rural development, has the goal of

making European agriculture more resilient to climate change, prevent poverty and generate employment in rural areas of Europe (Homolová et al., 2022).

According to the European Court of Auditors, countries in the European Union have to do much more to limit their meat consumption because of the greenhouse gas emissions this takes with it. The European Union has spoken out the ambition to be the first climate neutral continent in 2050 in the European Green Deal (European Commission, n.d.) Yet, the European Union has some contradictory policy, one hand, virtually no measures have been taken to reduce livestock and its accessory greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, EU funds are still being used for campaigns to promote meat and dairy. On the other hand, the European Union has strong ambitions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that are linked to agriculture and mainly to the livestock sector; this plays a big part in the Commission's "Farm to Fork Strategy". This strategy aims to make the European Union's food system more sustainable by having a positive impact on the environment and helping to mitigate climate change. Having the biggest impact on greenhouse gas emissions in agriculture, reducing livestock would be a logical step. Yet, nothing has been done to reduce livestock and subsidies are still being used for campaigns to promote meat and dairy.

In the end, the CAP of 2014 did not fulfill its promises regarding a more green and sustainable agriculture policy. Overall, the European landscape did not get greener, biodiversity did not increase and greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture did not decrease (European Court of Auditors, 2021). Now it's 2022, and the European Commission has launched a new CAP, with new ambitions and points of improvement regarding the last one. This paper will explore one of the factors that could help to explain why the ambitious plan of the European Commission was watered down and how this ultimately affected European agricultural policy as a whole, using the Netherlands as an example. Multiple scholars note that national and international lobby groups have a large influence on the decision making of various laws and policies. These lobby and interest groups also play a role in the forming of the Common Agricultural Policy. This influence has grown as EU institutions have become more powerful over time; this is due to the fact that the Treaty of Lisbon gave more power to EU institutions in 2009. There has been a shift of lobby groups focusing on national actors to EU actors since then (Pütz, 2021). This paper provides insight into the influence lobby groups have on European regulation and policy making, focused on farmer lobby groups and the Common Agricultural Policy.

1.3 Research question

The ambitions of the EU were quite high, this fact makes it quite remarkable that not only the set goals were not met, but there was also almost no improvement in the greening of European agriculture. Using a systematic literature review and document analysis, this paper explores how lobby groups work and their impact on policy making in the European Union. This way, there can be analyzed how lobby and interest groups influence the policymaking of the Common Agricultural Policy and the Dutch agricultural policy will be used as an example to investigate the result of these watered-down ambitions. The CAP influences agriculture around the whole European Union, member states have to establish which goals it wants to accomplish themselves. Investigating the Dutch case is relevant to understand the failure of the CAP as a whole because Dutch agricultural policy is highly influenced by the Common Agricultural Policy. Researching how this played out on the national level is important to understand the failure of the CAP as a whole.

As said above, member states were given the choice themselves which European targets they would focus on and which policy measures they wanted to take. Because these measures are chosen by member states themselves these measures can differ to a certain extent, but the core remains the same. In the Netherlands Dutch agricultural and rural development policy is the “Nederlandse Plattelandsontwikkeling Programma” (POP). The Netherlands focuses mainly on the following five aspects: Sustainability, competitiveness, and young farmers; Innovation and knowledge transfer; Agricultural nature management and biodiversity; Improving Water Quality; Livability in the countryside (Kort, 2022). To explain why the CAP of 2014 has failed to realize greener European agriculture and how lobby and interest groups had influence on these ambitions this paper formulates the following research question:

What influence do agricultural interest groups have on the Common Agricultural Policy and how did this affect European agriculture from 2014 till 2020?

In this study, the words ‘farmer’ and ‘agricultural’ are used interchangeably but can be understood as the same, this is just like the words ‘interest group’ and ‘lobby group’. So when mentioning agricultural interest groups, this can be interpreted in the same way as farmer lobby groups and vice versa.

This research question includes the period from 2013 till 2021, as the CAP was proposed in 2013 and the European Court of Auditors reviewed it in 2021. In the years when the CAP was in effect much literature has been written about it. Through this literature an answer will be giving to the main question the research question will be answered via the following sub-questions:

Which theories are relevant in explaining European policy making and the role of interest groups?

How was the CAP 2014-2020 established and what were its ambitions?

What were the results of the CAP 2014-2020?

How do lobby and interest groups influence European policy making?

1.4 Scientific relevance

This research contributes to the academic knowledge that has already been produced on the subject of the Common Agricultural Policy, the power lobby groups have and policy change in the European Union as a whole. The Common Agricultural Policy is a big and often complicated policy aspect of the European Union. By explaining the different forces at play in making this policy combined with the policy outcomes this paper contributes to a clearer view on relevant actors and manifesting a more effective Common Agricultural Policy.

European integration can be explained using two theories, the one of neofunctionalism and the one of liberal intergovernmentalism. These theories differ in how European integration takes place. This is relevant to this paper because the two theories have a different viewpoint of the importance of lobby and interest groups and their influence on EU policy. Adrian Kay (2000) wrote an article trying to explain the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. He used two different frameworks to try to explain how the CAP reform is mainly formed, the Interest group framework versus the Institutions framework. Both frameworks have a different view on the influence that lobby groups have on the reform of the CAP. Using these frameworks in the case of the Common Agricultural Policy of 2014 builds further to the existing knowledge of explaining phenomena related to European integration and policy making and the influence of interest groups in this. This paper will try to find out which of these frameworks contributes the best to explain the politics and outcomes of the CAP of 2014, building further to Kay's frameworks, power of lobby groups and the theories of European integration.

1.5 Societal relevance

In 2018 there sparked great agricultural protests in France, they blocked highways and set fire to piles of tires, causing massive traffic jams. Attempts by the government to cut back on the number of French farming regions eligible for EU subsidies provoked these protests (Yates, 2018). France was crucial in establishing the Common Agricultural Policy, and French farmers and their organizations are active in domestic politics. Similar to every other country in Western Europe, the number of French people who are farmers has decreased significantly after World War Two, along with the proportion of agriculture in its GDP. France remains the largest agricultural supplier in the EU, contributing 18 percent of the EU's total agricultural output. It also accounts for the majority of EU farm investment. In the meantime, French agriculture's political significance is waning, thousands of small farmers live in poverty and search for other employment every year (McCormick, 2020, p.380)

For many European citizens, Brussels is far away from home. Because Brussels feels so far away, some Europeans don't pay much attention to the policies that the EU implements, although it has a direct influence on the country they live in and thus on their lives. By addressing the bottlenecks in the Common Agricultural Policy and which actors play a role in forming it, a better policy can be implemented, which has a direct effect on society. By reviewing what processes led to policy measures that did not contribute to a decisive CAP and identifying which theoretical frameworks can explain these phenomena, this paper can contribute to a better policy-making process. In addition, uncovering relevant actors that people are not initially aware of can lead to a better understanding of the formation of EU policy. Although the national electorate has no direct influence on several EU institutions, they can choose which Member of the European Parliament will be elected for five years. These parliamentarians have a direct influence on the creation of the Common Agricultural Policy, so it is relevant to find out how these parliamentarians are influenced. By figuring this out people have a better understanding of EU policy making and contribute to a more sustainable CAP. By contributing to a better CAP, the European Union will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and increase biodiversity in European farmland. With this knowledge in mind, this research can have a positive influence on climate change and biodiversity rates in the European Union, which have a direct influence on the living conditions of its inhabitants.

2. Theoretical framework

To understand how the policies of the European Union are determined, it is necessary to look at different theories about policy change and how lobby groups in the European Union work. In addition, there will be examined how scientific literature defines lobby groups and how power can be used in different ways and the support for the agricultural sector in politics and society.

2.1 The definition of lobby and interest groups

Lobby groups have influenced EU policy making for a long time and the amount of them has increased over time. A pressure or lobby group is an organization that tries to influence public policy for the interest of a specific cause. According to Greenwood (2017) there has been a steady rise of European lobbying groups, resulting in almost 10.000 organizations in 2016.

Lobbying is any activity that may affect the design or implementation of a policy or law. The EU defines lobbying as follows:

'All activities (...) carried out with the objective of directly or indirectly influencing the formulation or implementation of policy and the decision-making processes of the EU institutions, irrespective of where they are undertaken and of the channel or medium of communication used, for example via outsourcing, media, contracts with professional intermediaries, think tanks, platforms, forums, campaigns and grassroots initiatives.'

(Official Journal of the European Union, 2014).

The European Union is an institution where 27 member states come together to make policies and laws that influence the whole European Union and sometimes the whole world, this makes it a global destination for lobbyists and lobby groups (Lobby Europe, 2019). According to Klüver (2013) there are several ways lobby and interest groups can influence policy making, the first is inside lobbying, meaning that lobbyists seek direct contact with legislators and their assistants. Next there is outside lobbying, which indicates the strategy of holding protests or demonstrations to put pressure on policy makers in the public arena. In addition, interest groups can shape policy making by influencing the process of selecting legislators and decision makers. Finally, interest groups can influence policy making by influencing structural power.

They have this power because they control business investments and job creation, which gives them economic power. Interest groups' power is also determined by factors such as their financial resources, the administrative and political abilities of their leaders, and the number and cohesion of their membership and political timing: presenting an issue when the political atmosphere is favorable. The amount of influence an organization has is determined by how much officials rely on it. Many interest groups also contribute significantly to political campaigns. The better lobbyists are in establishing a personal connection with officials, the more effective the group will be (Thomas, n.d.)

According to Beyers, Eising & Maloney (2008) interest groups can be identified according to three features: organization, political interest, and private status. There must be organizational structure to fulfill this premise, meaning broad movements and public opinions are excluded. Political interest is described as the goal to influence political decision making and the goal to adjust policy outcomes. The last feature is private status, meaning that an interest group cannot have interests in seeking public office and cannot be funded by the state or compete in elections. This description is in line with the official statement on interest groups in EU decision making, stating there must be a minimum of organization, pursue an interest linked to specific policy outcomes and seek this policy making as private actors, not by competing for electoral mandate (European Council, 2013).

According to Hatton (2011) EU lobby groups can be divided in two categories: private economic interest groups versus public or social interest groups. Private economic interest groups focus on companies and other organizations with an economic interest. These pressure groups are mainly focused on policies that focus on competition, trade and other areas which represent their members' interest. Public or social interest groups are mainly non-profit organizations that try to influence policies related to public interest such as the environment, human rights and animal welfare. These organizations have been very effective in the past years in influencing the European Commission to focus on sustainable development policies.

One of the reasons for the existence of lobby and interest groups is the small size of the European Commission, which leads to a shortage of staff to implement and oversee laws and regulations. This gap is filled by interest groups that act as watchdogs at the implementation phase (McCormick, 2020, p.272). But these groups are also there to pursue their own specific interests. by exerting political pressure on the various bodies of the EU they try to turn EU

regulations their way. According to Hatton (2011), pressure and lobby groups will mainly try to target the European Commission at the EU level because of its monopoly over the initiation of laws. The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union are targeted more at the national level because the selection procedure of MEPs and national ministers happens at the national level before they can influence EU legislation. According to McCormick (2020, p.272) interest groups have benefited from two structural problems that are embedded in the EU decision making system: relative weakness of party activity in the European parliament and the small size of the European Commission. The relatively weak party activity in the EP has left this organ with considerably less voter mobilization and engagement in comparison with the national level, leaving a gap for interest groups to dive in.

The presence of lobby and interest groups is in line with the view of pluralism, which views that in democracies power should be redistributed in a variety of different interest and lobby groups who push for their causes. According to pluralists, the successfulness of an interest group depends on the amount of means and variation in resources it has. According to pluralism, in the political marketplace, numerous opinions compete to be heard by the government and to have their preferred policies implemented. The perspectives are represented by people, political parties, and lobby groups, which leads to a competition between different interests. The problem with pluralism is that various groups have varying financial capacities, certain interests, like those of corporations, are well funded and well organized, leading to a tipping in the balance of power in favor of organizations that are more funded (Thomas, n.d.).

Now that there is an overview of the meaning of lobby groups, their interests and their function within international organizations and governments. There will be a look at different theories about the European Union and how these theories look at the role of lobby groups.

2.2 Neofunctionalism vs Liberal Intergovernmentalism

To explain the growth of international organizations such as the EU, integration theories were manufactured to explain the underlying mechanisms behind this growth.

Neofunctionalism was founded by Ernst Haas, he believed that international cooperation is a response to the growing interdependence of national economies, leading to an increasing level of cooperation. The increasing level of cooperation is caused by spillover effects, which mean

that cooperation in one field necessitates cooperation in another field, leading to reliance on non-state actors to implement new policies, such as interest groups. When this happens an organization will develop bureaucratic self-interests which may lead them to deviate from their originally assigned tasks. According to neofunctionalism these facts lead to an ever-increasing organization like the EU. Neofunctionalism is rooted in the schools of pluralism and functionalism. Instead of explaining international politics as a game in which states try to act to their interest, functionalists see international politics as a play between societal actors. When groups within states or among states start to believe that supranational institutions have more belief than in national institutions for realizing their interests, then regional integration will follow (Haas, 2004). Neofunctionalism is based on the idea of liberalism, meaning that state cooperation is characterized by positive sum games. This means that when a nation state gains something when cooperating with another state, this other state does not immediately lose something (which would be zero sum). It is based on the premise that international cooperation is the answer to advantages it takes with it when delivering public goods (Hooghe & Marks, 2019).

The counterpart of neofunctionalism is liberal intergovernmentalism, unlike neofunctionalism liberal intergovernmentalism believes that the preferences of an international organization are formed on the national level, by the member states. A core assumption is that governments will always try to defend their national interests in these international organizations. They will only cooperate when mutually advantageous bargains are possible, integration will only happen when it is the result of cooperation and competition between national governments. In liberal intergovernmentalism, state cooperation also does not have to be a zero-sum game but explains it as the product of national leaders and their functional interests. The forming of state interests is produced by powerful domestic groups, mainly companies (Schimmelfennig, 2021). In addition, international negotiations are purely intergovernmental, societal actors do not play a role anymore on the international level (Hooghe & Marks, 2019). A core element of liberal intergovernmentalism is the two-level game: national leaders will adjust their negotiating behavior according to the imperatives of the domestic level and the international level (Putnam, 1988). According to Liberal Intergovernmentalists, the Council of the European Union is more powerful than the European Parliament, this is because in this organ the interests of the member states are most obviously represented by representatives from the member states. This is in contrast with the Parliament, where the EU is more represented as a whole (McCormick, 2020, p.181).

Liberal intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism are both theories that focus on European integration and how it forms. The difference is that Liberal Intergovernmentalism identifies the nation states as the main actors while Neofunctionalism the main factors are a variety of political and social elites. This means different views on what the main actors are in international organizations such as the European Union. In the next chapter, there will be a deeper look into the main actors in determining European policy, with a specific focus on the Common Agricultural Policy.

2.3 Interest groups framework versus Institutions framework

Kay (2000) uses two different frameworks to explain the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, the interest groups framework versus the institutions framework. These frameworks are a group of hypotheses connected by shared themes or concepts.

The interest groups framework emphasizes the effect that interest groups have on the decision-making in the reforming of the CAP. This is due to the fact that Commission or individual members of the European Union are heavily influenced by lobby or interest groups. This means that the actors that are responsible for policy making in the European Union will adjust policies that are in the interest of these lobby groups. These organs are the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Agriculture and Fisheries Council configuration (AGRIFISH), which are the national ministers of agriculture and fisheries. Popular interest groups benefit from having political influence, which they can use to either force decisions to be made or not made or influence them. Nevertheless, the exclusive institutional access they have plays a crucial role in their power. The Common Agricultural Policy is mentioned in the literature as one of the successful activities of interest groups (Bednaříková & Jílková, 2012; Chambers, 2016). Hirschman (1970) already mentioned that the farmers' lobby is an example of a well-organized and disciplined group that was able to have influence in political processes. According to Kay, the interest group framework has been the long history of state support for European agriculture, the CAP included. Through the years there has been a system of institutional settlements between the farmers lobby and the governments. According to Moyer and Josling (1990, p.45) “the major farm policies survive because of the particular sets of institutions involved in the setting of police and the structure of the decision framework which they operate, as well as the pressure from interest groups” (Moyer & Josling, 1990, p.45)

According to Schmitt (1986) the absolute decline of the political strength of farm lobby groups does not mean that their influence is necessarily affected, because they do not have to compete with other groups for financial aid and attention. Interest groups will always be affected by the two-level game, meaning that international diplomacy is always negotiated on the domestic level and the international level (Putnam, 1988).

The institution's framework means that the institutional context of the pressures for CAP reform is the most important. Kay argues that EU institutes “may develop their own agendas” and can act autonomously of allied interest groups. The institution's framework does not argue that interest groups do not have any influence in the decision-making process. However, it argues that while interest groups do have influence, they do not hold the resources necessary to influence or veto the CAP reform process (Kay, 2000). One of the premises of this framework is that the national representatives in the AGRIFISH are the ministers of agriculture and that supporting agriculture is the reason their department exists, meaning institutional structures determine the policies. According to Peterson (1995, p. 81) EU institutions may develop their own agendas but can act separately from interest groups, they may have access to these institutions but will never have the influence to really reform policies. Every member of the AGRIFISH configuration is a member of a national government that operates from a negotiating position that has to be arranged, because of this, members can not deviate too much from proposals.

Now that an overview has been given of the power that institutions have versus the power that interest groups have, the next chapter will discuss types of power in more detail. Next chapter will deal with scientific theories that explain different kinds of power and classify them into different categories. Because in addition to the decisive power that institutions possess, these are the types of power that are not necessarily formal decision-making but may be important in ways that are relevant to interest groups.

2.4 How to define power

According to Lukes (2021) power can be divided in three categories, these are called the three faces of power: decision making, agenda setting and thought control. The first face of power is the easiest to identify: decision making is when an individual or organization acts according to a course they have decided. In this a difference can be made between coercive and non-coercive

action. This is about the reason behind an action because it can be voluntary or involuntary, in which the difference is the motivation behind an action. The second face of power is the one of agenda setting, which involves controlling the parameters of a conversation. For instance, one would want to do this to prevent the discussion participants from bringing up issues that are relevant to their benefits. The power of agenda setting is for example when concerned citizens demonstrate for a cause, trying to lobby for their interests. The third face of power is the one of thought control, where certain issues are not even talked about, trying to prevent somebody from knowing or realizing what their real interests are (Lukes, 2021).

According to Barnett & Duvall (2005) there are four kinds of power in international politics that can be determined. The four kinds of power are compulsory power, institutional power, structural power, and productive power. They differ in the way that power works through and their relational specificity, they call this the taxonomy of power. Whether power operates through relationships or societal structures is the first dimension. One viewpoint on this dimension views social interactions as the result of predetermined social actors' behavior toward one another. Here, power operates through interactions or behavioral relationships. The other viewpoint is the constitutional social connections. Here, actors are social creatures with their own power and interests who are constituted through social interactions that underlie their social statuses, as a result, power is indisputably social.

How specific social ties are through which power operates is the second dimension. The first view sees power as a direct relationship, a power relation can only be known if there is a connection between the two actors that can be seen and tracked. Generally speaking, particular relations involve the direct relationship between actors who are close by in terms of proximity to one another in time, space or social status. The other view sees power as socially diffuse. These notions allow for the existence of power even if the relationship is distant. This opposes the requirement that power works through an instant, direct link.

	Direct relationship	Diffuse relationship
Power works through interactions of specific actors	Compulsory power	Institutional power
Power works through social relations of constitution	Structural power	Productive power

Overview of different kinds of power according to Barnett & Duvall (2005).

Compulsory power is when there is a direct control over one another, this happens when actor A's activities influence B's behavior, also if this does not happen on purpose. Even when a person in positions of dominance is unaware of the unintended consequences of their acts, power still remains. Institutional power is an actor's arbitrary dominance over others. Here, it is about the formal and informal institutions that act as a middleman between A and B. Structural power influences actors' destiny and circumstances of existence. Relationships between slaveholders and slaves show how social systems create uneven social rights and capacities. It also affects how they perceive themselves and what their personal interests are. This has an impact on the actor's interests, leading it to "accepting their place". Productive power looks like structural power but involves more generalized and diffuse social processes. Productive power is the formation of all social subjects with varied social powers through discursive procedures and systems (Barnett & Duvall, 2005).

Now that an overview has been given about different types of power and how actors can exercise this kind of power, the next chapter will look at why the agricultural sector and farmers in particular can count on such great societal support, which also allows them to have a great deal of this power.

2.5 The support for the agricultural sector

Bednaříková & Jílková (2012) Argue that the national agricultural lobby in the European Union is very effective because of various reasons, they prove this on the basis that there are three fundamental requirements that influence the strength to support intervention. First off, there is increased demand for assistance and protection when a certain sector (in this agriculture), is experiencing an inevitable fall in significance as a result of economic progress. The amount of money that has been transferred and the amount of income per capita have an impact on the

political backing for the redistribution of policies. They argue that agricultural subsidies specifically demonstrate these characteristics. Secondly, they argue that it is more probable that government support for a certain industry will come as a result of the sectors connections to the electorate and the significance of its output for survival and success, meaning that the fact that farmers produce goods that people use in their daily lives, the government will be more likely to support them. Thirdly, there is an argument that manufacturers can make more money when using political influence to manipulate a market economy when the sector is smaller. Since manufacturing fundamentally requires specialization, producers are more inclined than consumers to focus their efforts. As a consequence, the gains from the market's protection for producers outweigh any costs that the protection causes for consumers or taxpayers (Bednaříková & Jílková, 2012).

All this means that producers put more effort into convincing the political system of their advantages than consumers and taxpaying citizens put into opposing such protection. When economies grow over time, the less vital agriculture becomes for an economy, meaning that when the economy shifts away from an agricultural economy there is intense demand to promote agriculture. Therefore, the effective liberalization of agriculture relies on a fall in the prominence, voter power and supporters of the agricultural sector as well as the sympathizers it attracts. The liberalization of agriculture is strongly backed by sustainable economic growth, a move away from its agricultural foundations, as well as the modernization and the growth of the agricultural industry. The agricultural sector is more reliant on the number of subsidies and more resistant to their withdrawal the higher the amount of subsidies they get and the longer they have received these subsidies. The Common Agricultural Policy has been called expensive and unproductive and its critique is growing, despite this, reforming this policy has been very challenging. It is possible that states continue to collect and spend substantial sums of money from the EU budget on this policy because of different reasons. This is mainly because of the history that the CAP has and why it was implemented (Bednaříková & Jílková, 2012).

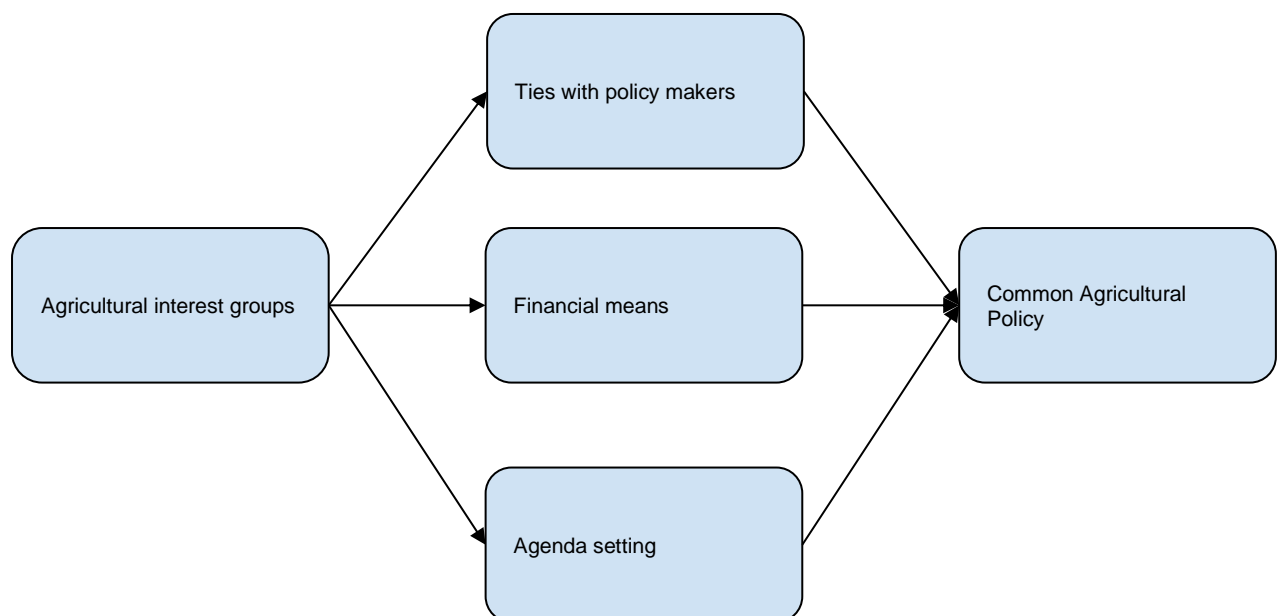
According to Potter and Tilzey (2007) The CAP has evolved into an agricultural social safety net where the government provides a long-term livelihood assurance for farmers all over the European Union. In particular, institutional guarantees for high agricultural prices were in place, and import levels and non-tariff barriers shielded the agricultural sector against price cutting imports. The inventors of the Common Agricultural Policy believed that the system of government subsidies and border protection that resulted would be self-financing since the

expenses associated with price support would be covered by an import tariffs refund. But according to Bednaříková & Jílková (2012), the designers were unaware of the technical revolution in agriculture that occurred after the second world war, which allowed more productive farmers to respond to a promise of better prices by boosting production. As mentioned before, this led to a great overproduction of certain products, such as dairy and grain. The well-organized and bureaucratically established agricultural lobby was successful in blocking important reforms of the CAP for a considerable amount of time. Despite its rising expenses and complexity. Farmers and those who backed them, especially the agricultural lobby, vigorously maintained the flow of revenues and safeguarded borders despite governmental help and the concomitant network of production support. But it is evident that the agricultural lobby remained a powerful force that sought to block liberal changes to the Common Agricultural Policy. It is true that the agricultural lobby was able to prevent excessive expenses due to their solitary interest and remarkable organization. This could explain why European citizens are less likely to reject agricultural subsidies, realizing the imbalance of objectives between the agricultural lobby and European citizens. European citizens must recognize the basic organizational difference between farmers and possible compensating forces when cutting agricultural subsidies and to reduce the subsidies themselves. In addition, non-farmers, and businesses with an interest in the agricultural sector must be considered in order to understand the true strength of the agricultural lobby. The growth of agriculture is of great importance to those who live in rural regions where agriculture is the primary industry. This is also due to the fact that a decrease in prices would have a negative impact on land prices. This means that the agroindustry and food processors are likewise keenly interested in the destiny of farmers (Bednaříková & Jílková, 2012).

2.6 Conceptual framework

Below is the conceptual model that will be used in this paper. This model assumes there is a full mediation, in this model there is a dependent and independent variable which are influenced by a mediating variable. The independent variable is the amount of influence agricultural interest groups have on the Common Agricultural Policy, they use their resources, such as monetary means and meetings with policy makers, but also will try to set the agenda to turn the public and political debate in their favor by for example using the media to their advantage to empower their cause. The Common Agricultural Policy is the dependent variable, this variable is therefore influenced by the agricultural interest groups, if they exert a large

influence with the above-mentioned resources, the Common Agricultural Policy will have less ambitious greening measures due to the lobbying set up which. In this way the Common Agricultural Policy has a direct influence on the amount of green agriculture that is practiced in the European Union. This means that the more farmer lobby groups there are, the fewer green measures are taken in the Common Agricultural Policy. The Common Agricultural Policy has a direct effect on the amount of green agriculture in the European Union, when there are stricter greening rules, this will have a direct effect on the amount of green agriculture and vice versa, and lobby groups have an influence on this. All the different means of influence that these groups exert can be seen as different kinds of power as mentioned in the theoretical framework. This power can be direct such as the ties with policy makers and the financial resources but can also be more indirect such as the forms such as agenda setting. All these forms of power and everything in between are used by these lobby groups to shape the Common Agricultural Policy to a form that serves their own interests.



2.7 Hypothesis

Because the interest group framework and the institutions framework have a different view on the importance of interest groups in decision making processes, a hypothesis can be formed by researching the importance of these interest groups. According to the interest groups framework interest groups play a crucial role in the forming of policies in organizations as the European Union. The institution's framework acknowledges the influence of interest groups

but does not deem them as crucial. In addition, neofunctionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism have a different view on the importance of societal actors such as lobby groups. Where neo-functionalists see the importance of societal actors and supranational organizations liberal intergovernmentalism sees international negotiations as something that happens purely between member states. In addition, various theories have provided insight into the different types of power that can be exercised. Interest groups also use this power through various means they possess. With these theories in mind these different frameworks will be used as lenses to look at the forming of the Common Agricultural Policy and what role interest groups play in this. The following hypothesis is formed to find out the importance of agricultural interest groups in the forming of the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union:

Agricultural interest groups will use their influence to shape the Common Agricultural Policy when it is modified against their interests.

With agricultural interest groups, this study refers to various actors who have interests in the agricultural sector and are therefore influenced by the Common Agricultural Policy, for this reason they want to influence the policy in their best interests. These groups consist of farmers' organizations that stand up for the interests of farmers throughout the European Union but also companies that do business with farmers, like animal feed producers, abattoirs and fertilizer and pesticide manufacturers. These organizations and companies all have an interest in the agricultural sector and where there are interests, there are conflicting interests. In the empirical analysis a possible explanation will be made to give a clear answer to the given hypothesis. Based on the used theories and frameworks, the conclusion will indicate whether this hypothesis should be confirmed or denied on the basis of empirical evidence.

3. Research design

3.1 Methodology

In this paper a case study approach is used because this approach allows in-depth and complex issues in real-life settings. Case studies allow one to research a certain subject in a deeper way than with other research methods. The central focus of a case study is the need to investigate an event or phenomenon in depth and in its natural context. In this case, the event is the CAP failure. This research chooses for a single case study, this means it studies the variation in a case over a period. Before doing a case study, the case should be defined by laying pre-defined boundaries which clarifies the time, nature, and geography of the selected case. This characteristic poses more problems because the boundaries of a certain phenomenon can be very vague, because the boundaries of a system can be unclear (Vennix, 2019). According to Yin (1989) case studies should or can be used when one wants to figure out why a certain phenomenon is happening, in addition the researcher should have little to no control over the research situation, meaning the phenomenon is researched in its natural context. Case studies can be single or multiple, this means that the researcher studies only one case or more cases are used for the research. In addition, there can be chosen for an exploratory, descriptive or explanatory case study. This study chooses for a single explanatory case study, this is because the CAP of 2014 was the first one that had such high ambitions to green European agriculture, and this research seeks to explain how lobby groups influence the fact that these green ambitions did not come about.

In a case study different kinds of empirical evidence is found and are used to arrive at a conclusion, this method is called data triangulation. This means that multiple types of sources

are used to give a more complete insight to a certain phenomenon and increase a research's internal validity. A case study is y-centered, which means that it attempts to explain an effect by identifying the causal mechanisms on which it relies. Due to this fact this research formulates its own hypothesis based on theories in order to try to explain the observed effects. A case study can help to understand causal relations that come forward from a new policy or a service development (Crowe et al., 2011). This given fact means that it is a good fit for the research on the outcomes of the Common Agricultural Policy, because it is a large and detailed subject. Because every CAP is different, case studies are the right way to research different policies, especially with the new sustainability challenges and greening measures. This research will mainly be using secondary data in the form of books, scientific literature and documents written on the CAP of 2014 and the relevant theoretical frameworks.

A systematic literature review consists of three main steps, planning the review, executing the review and reporting the review. This means that research establishes the necessity for a review, defines the research questions and creates a review process. Xiao & Watson (2019) identify eight steps in conducting a systematic literature review: defining the research topic, creating and testing the review methodology, scouring the literature, selecting relevant articles, evaluating their quality, obtaining data, analyzing and synthesizing data, and reporting the results. When defining the research topic, it is important that the different research activities are mapped out of the relevant literature and are connected to the research question. Creating the review methodology is the predetermined strategy that outlines the approach taken to carry out. This element is important because future researchers may replicate the research that has been done for cross-check and validation using the same methodology. After that, the search for literature can be started, Google scholar is a very reliable database where secondary sources such as journals and scientific papers can be found. For primary sources such as newspaper articles and reports published by non-profit organizations and international organizations the standard Google search engine and the university library (Nexis Uni) can be used, this is called "grey literature". In addition, this research used forward and backward research. Backward research means that a search to find material that was mentioned by the publications was done in order to acquire a full list of literature. Forward research was done to locate all papers that have subsequently cited the reviewed articles, this was also done through Google Scholar. The research topic should be used to generate the search terms. To identify the literature, this research used the terms "Common Agricultural Policy 2014-2020", "Common Agricultural Policy greenhouse gas" and "Common Agricultural Policy sustainability" to start the search

for relevant scientific material. Google and Google Scholar were used for these terms to find (scientific) literature on the CAP and the outcomes of the policy from 2014 till 2020. To find the most relevant literature on the outcomes of the CAP this research restricted the publication date to 2016 till 2022. The same method was used for the terms “Common Agricultural Policy lobby/interest groups”, “European Union lobby/interest groups” and “Common Agricultural Policy Farmer lobby/interest groups” to find literature on the influence of lobby and interest groups in the European Union and specifically on the case for the Common Agricultural Policy. The found articles were then evaluated and screened, this was to make sure that publications whose content does not apply to this research was eliminated.

After finding the relevant literature the next step of this research was to get the complete texts for a quality evaluation step. Quality evaluation serves as a screen to polish the list of publications. The following steps, extracting data, analyzing data and reporting the data were subsequently followed and will become apparent in the empirical analysis. This research has systematically reviewed more than hundred articles and analyzed documents and newspapers to investigate what the factors are to explain the failure of the CAP 2014-2020 and what influence interest groups had in this. This method was chosen because interviewing commissioners and representatives of multinational companies was out of this research reach and means. Since the introduction of the CAP of 2014, many reports and scientific articles have been written about its implementation and results. In addition, almost ten news articles and seven proposed policy amendments have been used as primary data to strengthen the validity of the literature review. This is because when research uses both primary and secondary sources these two kinds of sources complement each other to help build more validity. In the end, more than a hundred sources are included in the bibliography, and many more articles (which have been added in the appendix) have been analyzed for relevance to this study.

4. Empirical analysis

4.1 Relevant actors in shaping EU policy

In EU law and policy making, there are three bodies that play a central role in the decision making. In most cases the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council of the European Union (CEU) (sometimes called the Council of Ministers) are responsible for the forming of policies and laws that are applicable to the European Union. The European Commission is the main executive body of the EU, it manages EU policy and oversees the implementation of law and policy making. It is managed by a College of Commissioners; every member state nominates a commissioner that takes place in this college. It uses a 'right of initiative' to propose new laws, which are then scrutinized and adopted by the European parliament and the Council of the European Union.

There are twenty-seven members of the Commission (before Brexit there were twenty-eight), each of whom was chosen for a term of five years by their national governments. A department with more than 30.000 employees is under the Commission's control. Because of their aims and affiliations, the officials of the Commission and their employees are sometimes referred to as "Eurocrats". This is because they are supposed to advance the interests of the European Union rather than those of their own countries. The president of the European Commission is chosen by the European Parliament and is in charge of the Commission. It has a number of significant powers that aid in the development of shared EU policies, including the Common Agricultural Policies. Despite the fact that the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers frequently start suggestions for policies, the Commission is able to look into potential solutions to the issues it has identified. The commission also has the authority to carry out EU regulations. Broad policy objectives are often approved by the European Parliament and the Council of ministers, putting the Commission in charge of establishing the detailed guidelines, regulations and processes needed to achieve those objectives. The implementation of EU policies provides the commission significant impact over such policies, in addition to the power to determine funding priorities. It is tasked with putting into effect the international agreements that established the EU and fostering confidence among EU countries (Pease, 2018, p.26-7).

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union share the authority for the legislative function in the European Union. The European Parliament is directly elected by the citizens of EU countries. It makes decisions about European laws together with the Council of the European Union and approves the EU budget. The European Parliament, although having minimal legislative authority, is primarily in charge of monitoring the Commission. The Parliament has the authority to support the Commission's annual budget as well as any recommendations made by the Council or Commission. It lacks the authority to approve line items. Despite the fact that the Commission and the Council have most power, the Parliament plays a significant role in the co-decision procedure by contributing to the creation of EU common policies. The 705 (before Brexit there were 751) members of the European Parliament, who are all chosen by the continent's citizens, continue to have a primarily legislative and symbolic role. Every five years, there are European elections where positions are distributed proportionally depending on the size of a country's population (Pease, 2018, p.26-7)

The Council of the European Union is where national ministers of each country oversee policies. The Council makes important decisions for the European Union, it is divided into ten smaller, more specialized sub-councils. These ministers can meet in a variety of configurations depending on the topic that is relevant, meaning that in the case of the CAP, all agricultural ministers meet (European Union, n.d.). Formally, the Council votes in accordance with a weighted voting method and a qualified majority rule. According to Lisbon's treaty criteria, these weights are dependent on the size of a state's number of inhabitants, and for a proposition to be approved, it must get the support of 55 percent of the ministers and contain 65 percent of the European population. Unanimity is generally required for important policy choices before these are implemented. When this happens, the permanent officials handle the majority of conflicts behind the scenes. The Council of Ministers is a dynamic and complex group whose membership varies based on the subject matter. (Pease, 2018, p.26-7)

Although members of the Council, who are national ministers, should protect the national interest of member states, it should not view this as its most important responsibility, which is to promote the interest of the community. Despite some seeing these two goals as compatible, others see them as contradictory, the Council has been torn between these goals ever since. Ultimately, its work is intergovernmental and the sum of national concerns because it is

dominated by ministers from national governments. It is possible, however, that ministers will reach decisions that promote the broader interests of the EU because of the search for compromise, which is sometimes disadvantageous to member states (Lewis, 2012).

4.2 The two pillars and farm to fork

In 2005 the Common Agricultural Policy was reformed, resulting in two pillars that the CAP was built on. Pillar one is for direct income support and is almost completely financed by the European Union and is the biggest part of funding. With about 40 billion euros it makes up around 75 percent of the CAP budget. The direct income support is destined for farmers, farmers in the European Union are subsidized based on the number of hectares of land they own (European Commission, n.d.). In 2014 the commission set a new objective: greening. 70% of the pillar's budget would go to direct income support. On top of their hectare subsidy, farmers that contribute to nature conservation could receive a 30% of subsidy. Every farmer in the European Union receives a subsidy of 260 euros per hectare of agricultural land they own per year, they must meet environmental and sustainability requirements. When farmers meet an extra set of measures regarding the biodiversity on their land, they receive another 115 euros per hectare per year. Young farmers who are below 41 years of age receive another 50 euros per hectare per year (Utrecht University of Applied Sciences, 2019). At last, farmers could manage Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs), this is an area of farmland where agricultural practices have a positive influence on biodiversity and the climate (Mourik & Vleemigh, 2013).

The second pillar, which accounts for around 25% of the CAP budget, focuses on rural development, this part is about rural development policies that member states set up themselves. It is destined for innovation, co-operation, and local projects in Europe's most rural areas in which member states are allowed to give their own interpretation to. In 2019, the Netherlands spent 260 million euros on rural development, half of the budget is financed by the EU and the other half by member states, which in the case of the Netherlands is mainly done by the provinces (Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit, 2022).

In May 2020 the Farm to Fork Strategy was announced, this is a new policy proposed by the European Union which is at the heart of the European Green Deal, with the goal of making food systems more equitable, healthier, and ecologically friendly. This is done through different goals, by having a positive influence on the environment, mitigating and adapting to

climate change, reversing the loss of biodiversity and providing food security. In addition, the European Commission wishes to minimize reliance on pesticides and antimicrobials, eliminate over-fertilization, enhance organic farming, improve animal welfare, and reverse biodiversity loss. The policy does not only want to tackle the production side, but also change the consumer side by limiting food waste and switching to a more circular food system (European Commission, 2020).

4.3 Proposition and outcomes

The negotiations of the CAP of 2014 started in 2011, the European Union announced in 2013 that there was an agreement over a new Common Agricultural Policy, with sustainable agriculture being an important aspect. For the first time, green payments were introduced, meaning that farmers would get paid according to the number of hectares they owned but only would receive the full payment if they met certain greening goals. Before this policy (Dutch) farmers were paid based on their production in the base period of 2000 - 2002. Other goals were crop diversification, devoting around 5 percent of land to Ecological Focus Areas (EFA's) and the maintenance of permanent pasture (Mourik & Vleemigh, 2013).

The new CAP immediately spiked controversy when it was announced, it was seen as conservative and unnecessarily complicated. In addition, the CAP had so many components and was applied to so many distinct farming communities among the whole European Union that it could never satisfy everyone fully because of the many compromises that have to be made (Erjavec & Erjavec, 2015). In the original proposal of the CAP, the European Commission aimed to reform direct payments, switching to a hectare-based payment per farm instead of the old produce-based system. Several countries, like Ireland, Spain, Austria, Belgium, France, and Italy protested this proposal because these countries have a great variation of farm sizes and additional payments. Introducing the single payment to all agricultural holdings would have led to a strong redistribution of payments, leading to strong political pressures on their national governments by large farmers' lobby groups (Erjavec & Erjavec, 2015). According to Anania et al. (2015) one of the reasons the CAP did not have strong greening measures is because of the role of the European Parliament, where the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development (COMAGRI) was able to influence much of the decision making. An important aspect of this was that farm interests were often met with higher regard than environmental organizations (Anania et al., 2015).

These political pressures also led to a less ambitious CAP reform than the Commission first proposed. Germany was especially heavily influenced by the farm lobby to lower the proportion of land to be dedicated to EFA's (Erjavec & Erjavec, 2015). While the Commission first proposed that a minimum of 7 percent of farmland had to be turned into Ecological Focus Areas (EFA's) to promote biodiversity the new proposal was set to 5 percent with a possible increase to 7 percent. Because this rule only is required for farms under 15 hectares, this makes up 90 percent of the farmers, together they own one third of the European agricultural area. In addition, the new proposal also excluded small farms which consisted of less than ten hectares from the new crop diversification rules which were meant to improve soil quality. The problem with this was that one third of EU farms consisted of less than ten hectares, meaning one third of EU farms did not have to rotate their crops (Spence, 2013). farmers with between 10 and 30 hectares had to grow at least two different crops, farmers with more than 30 hectares had to grow at least three different crops. According to Ben Koks, expert bird conservationist, bird populations in the Netherlands have only decreased since the new CAP was implemented. According to Koks, the measures on crop rotation and permanent grasslands had significantly no impact. This was due to the fact that most farmers did this themselves already because crop rotation is already present in common agricultural practice, it was not an ambitious change this unambitious change can be seen as a weakening of the common agricultural policy (Van Doorn & Smidt, 2017). Nevertheless, Koks was very enthusiastic about the Ecological Focus Areas, but this was dismantled when farmer lobby groups arose to tackle the policy. There was a motion in the parliament presented by the "Christen-Democratisch Appèl" (CDA) and the "Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie" (VVD) where the policy was adjusted. From then on, farmers would receive their green subsidies if they would sow in so-called "catch crops" and "green manure crops" after they harvested their crops. Catch crops absorb nitrogen which is left in the soil and green manure crops increase the quality of the soil. According to Koks, the measure was too weak because farmers were already sowing these crops and nature does not significantly improve because of it (van Dinther, 2020). Alex Brenninkmeijer, member of the European Court of Auditors for the Netherlands concluded that member states toned down the green initiatives too much, resulting in a weak greening policy. In addition, farmers did not have to do very much for the subsidies they received for the green initiatives because the targets were unverifiable. In the Netherlands, the province of Friesland received the highest number of green subsidies, nevertheless Friesland is the province where the number of wild birds has

decreased the most in recent years. This is also due to the fact that catch crops and green manure crops did not increase the biodiversity, according to Brenninkmeijer (van Dinther, 2020).

In the case of the Netherlands, dairy farmers receive the most budget by far, receiving more than half of subsidies (CBS, 2022). According to the European Court of auditors, one third of EU farming subsidies was received by farmers who earn a yearly modal income in the Netherlands (European Court of Auditors, 2021). According to Anne van Doorn (2017) of Wageningen University, there is a correlation between the Dutch provinces that receive the most subsidies and the lack of biodiversity. One of the reasons for this is the old subsidy system, where the most intensively producing farmers received the most subsidy, resulting in the most environmental pressure. Under the new system, farmers receive subsidies per hectare, meaning the biggest farmers receive the most amount of subsidy. In 2013, only 20 percent of farmers received around 80 percent of the direct payments in the CAP's first pillar. (Nègre, 2013). The costs of farming are high while the margin of profit is very low, only the farmers that intensify their farm can keep up with the prize war. Between 2005 and 2016 the number of agricultural companies in the meat and dairy sector has decreased by more than a third. Despite the decline, in that time the number of animals has only increased, because the biggest farms keep growing and intensifying (Wittemanb, 2021).

Jeltsje Van Der Meer-Kooistra and Henk Folmer acknowledge the problem that agricultural policies are mostly received by the biggest farmers, who use these subsidies for mainly intensification and upscaling. This intensification and upscaling is one of the direct reasons biodiversity rates in Europe are decreasing. In addition, traditional characteristic Dutch landscapes filled with flowers and herbs are substituted by farming acres, having a bad influence on living climate and recreation. Because of intensive agriculture the fertility and quality of soils decrease overtime, intensive agriculture also leads to emissions of particulate matter and ammonia, having a bad influence on the health of local residents. Van Der Meer and Kooistra see an unfair reality, the negative consequences of the intensive agricultural companies is the result of the CAP, which is being paid by taxpayers (Van Der Meer-Kooistra & Folmer, 2018).

4.4 The means and activities of interest groups

As stated above, lobbying entails exerting pressure on decision makers to achieve favorable policy results for farmers and companies that do business with farmers. Developing close personal relationships between state officials and public representatives is a big part of lobbying. This is in order to gain trust and credibility to persuade officials (Thomas, n.d.).

Farmers' interest and lobby groups are powerful in every country as well at the EU level, governments of all stripes are reluctant to alienate such a well-organized lobby. The reason for this is that in Europe, farmer groups are deeply embedded in the political system, so they are well positioned to influence policymakers disproportionately more than other groups related to agriculture, such as environmentalists. Due to the many wars that have taken place in Europe it was often haunted by memories of food shortages. In order to tackle this issue governments developed a policymaking regime based on an assumption of mutual interdependence between decision makers and interest groups. To protect farmers' interests, governments have long intervened in agricultural markets at guaranteed prices through farm support programs (Gallagher et al., 2011, p.473). When these countries entered the European Union over the years these policies led to the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy. The farmers' organization quickly learned how important it was to exert pressure on the European level in Brussels as well as in their national governments, and they adapted quickly to do so. As a result, even pluralist systems such as the EU often exercise the power of the farmers' lobby in an institutionalized manner, meaning they standardly get a seat at the table when decisions are made (Gallagher et al., 2011, p.473). In several European countries, farmer lobby and interest groups have long had consultative relationships with agricultural ministries. Farmers and government employees have a history of resolving disputes among themselves and, wherever feasible, excluding interest groups with different interests. Moreover, it has become fairly typical for farmer associations to participate in policy implementation, particularly when it comes to allocating official national and regional production quotas for certain agricultural products among agricultural producers. This strong collaboration between the government and farmers may initially appear to be virtually corporatist. However, because no other societal partner has a formal involvement in the political issue, this sort of decision-making setup is more like a tight policy network than an illustration of corporatism (Gallagher et al., 2011, p.473).

According to research conducted by DeSmog there are at least fourteen companies that have pushed back or downplayed EU environmental and chemical policies. These big industry associations and agrochemical companies have since then used their lobbying power to push back the European Union's plans to change to a more sustainable form of farming. They do this, for example, by trying to block legislation to reduce pesticides. These fourteen companies are Corteva, BASF, Syngenta, Bayer, Agricultural Products Company (UPL), The European Crop Care Association, Ascenza, Afrasa, Nufarm, Indofil, Yara, Fertilizers Europe, Cefic and Sumitomo. The Common Agricultural Policy and mainly the Farm to Fork strategy aim to reduce the number of pesticides used in agriculture. Apart from the negative impact pesticides have on biodiversity levels the chemicals in pesticides are often based on methane gas. The European Union's plan to reduce pesticides and fertilizers is pushed back by companies that manufacture these pesticides and fertilizers along with trade groups that represent their interests (De Lorenzo & Sherrington, 2021). These interest groups mainly exert their influence on EU policy making by their monetary means they spend on lobbying and their membership of expert and advisory groups where they advise the EU on new policies and other decision-making processes. Together they spent almost 46 million euros on lobbying activities in 2019 and 2020. The biggest agricultural industrial (agro-industrial) players in the agricultural lobby industry in the European Union are Bayer, BASF, Corteva and Syngenta. Bayer is a German pharmaceutical and life sciences company, they focus on pesticides, crop protection, seeds, digital farming, and environmental science. BASF is a chemical company which focuses on chemicals that are used in farming. Corteva is a chemical and seed company which was formed in 2019 after a fusion of Dow AgroSciences, Dupont Crop Protection and Pioneer seeds. Syngenta is an agrochemical company that makes pesticides and seeds for agriculture. These giant producers of agrochemicals and pesticides are advocating for less strict action and rules for agro-industrial chemicals and climate objectives. By meeting with commissioners and EP's and spending money on intensive lobbying they try to advocate for their cause (De Lorenzo & Sherrington, 2021).

The biggest farmer interest groups in the European Union are the Committee of Professional Agricultural Organizations (Copa) and the General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives (Cogeca), which form the alliance of Copa-Cogeca and are the most influential interest groups for European farmers (Copa-Cogeca, n.d.). Farmer lobby groups such as Copa-Cogeca and agro-industrial players such as Bayer and Monsanto have often tried over the years to resist stricter pesticide use regulations and lower pay for the largest farmers. These parties have

mainly focused on preserving the status quo and have also openly lobbied for this. While Copa-Cogeca claims to speak for 22 million farmers and is known as the most well-known farmers voice in Brussels they will not always act on this premise. According to research their stances on CAP reform are more in line with agrochemical firms and large-scale farmers than with small-scale farmers (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2020). Together with Bayer-Monsanto and Syngenta these agricultural ambassadors have been resisting new EU pesticide reduction targets. They have firmly lobbied against any reduction in subsidies for the highest income and largest landowners and encouraged new farming practices which are in the hands of a small number of multinational corporations like Bayer and Syngenta. In addition, they argued for less strict greening rules and sanctions, this is because organic farming leads to lower sales for fertilizer and pesticide sellers (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2019)

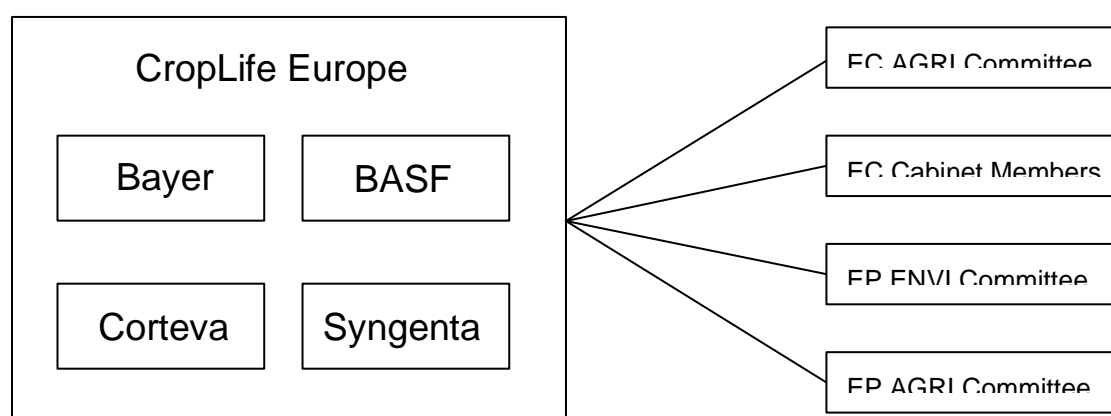
According to a report by InfluenceMap (2017), around 50 of the 250 largest listed, non-state-owned industrial businesses are the most powerful in determining climate policy, with the other 200 mostly abstaining. 35 out of the top 50 are actively opposing climate action, including BASF and Bayer. These companies lobby to delay or dilute efficiency and CO2 emissions standards and procedures in Europe and Northern America. They do this by interactions with government representatives, financial support of political campaigns, employment of former government employees and sponsorship of official events. It also includes how businesses with great financial resources influence the public opinion on climate concerns through advertising and research funding. It asserts that businesses may affect policy through supporting and joining lobbying organizations that engage in similar activities (InfluenceMap, 2017).

In 2019 and 2020 Corteva spent almost one million euros yearly on EU lobbying costs. Between 2010 and 2020, Bayer spent between 1,5 million and 4,5 million euros a year on lobbying costs, BASF spent between 2 million and 3.5 million euros yearly in this time period and Syngenta spent between 0,5 and 2 million euros yearly. (LobbyFacts Database, n.d.). One of the ways these companies try to influence EU policy is meetings they have with European bodies dealing with agriculture and sustainability. These organs are the European Commission's Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) Committee, The European Commission (who dictate the Green Deal), The European Parliament's Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) Committee and the European Parliament's Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) Committee.

<i>Number of meetings between organizations</i>	Corteva	BASF	Bayer	Syngenta
EC AGRI Committee	1	0	1	0
EC Cabinet members	1	4	2	2
EP ENVI Committee	2	10	1	0
EP AGRI Committee	1	4	2	1

Number of meetings there have been between EU organs and agro-industrial companies in 2020 and 2021. (De Lorenzo & Sherrington, 2021)

Among others, Bayer, BASF, Corteva and Syngenta are part of CropLife Europe, this is a collective which represents crop protection in Europe, trying to limit regulation strictness on pesticides. According to a report from the EU transparency register CropLife Europe has met with commissioners, members of their cabinet, or directors in 24 meetings in 2019 and 2020 and spent around 0.6 million euros on lobbying in this time.



Overview of ties between agroindustrial organizations and EU bodies (Hope, 2021)

The influence of Copa-Cogeca is notable in the EU's Civil Dialogue Groups (CDGs), set up to establish a forum for exchange between agricultural stakeholders and the European Commission. These stakeholders contain mainly NGOs and businesses. In 2021, out of the total 943 seats of the dialogue group of agricultural experts, 442 seats were occupied by people who

are directly tied or linked to Copa-Cogeca. For the dialogue group on direct payments and greening the lobby group holds 28 of the 72 seats (Herman, 2021). While these groups should defend the interests of farmers, they sometimes ignore these interests. This is due to the fact that these lobby groups not only represent farmers, but also the big agri-food companies like Bayer and Unilever, and sometimes these interest's conflict. An example of this is the European Livestock Voice, this lobby club is paired with Copa-Cogeca, both these organizations are financed by the veterinary pharmaceutical industry, meat processors, animal feed manufacturers and meat exporters (Witteman, 2021a). All this political influence is backed by money flows that are invested in lobbying activities, among other things. Copa and Cogeca yearly spent between 1 and 2 million euros between 2011 and 2020, with peaks in 2013 and 2019, the years before both CAPs were implemented (LobbyFacts Database, n.d.).

	Copa	Cogeca
2011	€1.125.000	€1.125.000
2012	€1.125.000	€1.125.000
2013	€1.875.000	<i>None declared</i>
2014	€1.125.000	€1.125.000
2015	€1.125.000	€1.125.000
2016	€1.125.000	€1.125.000
2017	€1.125.000	€1.125.000
2018	€1.125.000	€1.125.000
2019	€1.625.000	€1.625.000

Amount of euros spend on Lobbying by Copa and Cogeca per year (LobbyFacts Database, n.d)

Because Copa-Cogeca represents the European agri-cooperatives, they also have a lot of meetings with EU delegates. Copa-Cogeca is granted private meetings with the president of the Council of the European Union before important meetings of European agriculture ministers. Other kinds of interest groups do not receive the same privileges and have been told that Copa-Cogeca's access to meet the president before these private meetings is "tradition".

Julliet Leroux, Agriculture Adviser to the Green group in the European Parliament, says the organization doesn't even need to lobby very hard because they have very outspoken defenders in the Agriculture Committee (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2020).

	EC AGRI Committee	EC Cabinet members	EP AGRI Committee	EP ENVI Committee
Number of meetings with Copa-Cogeca	17	10	26	1

Number of meetings there have been between EU organs and Copa-Cogeca in 2020 and 2021.

(De Lorenzo & Sherrington, 2021)

Interest groups lobbying efforts have unquestionably grown more towards the European level as a result of their increased professionalism and grasp of how the EU operates and has evolved through time. The behavior of interest groups have been substantially influenced by the legal and regulatory environment in which they have been operating, ranging from the national level and the completely EU level, developing different strategies. As the EU grew more supranational over time, interest groups have shifted their lobbying activities more toward the EU level. The shift towards the EU from the national level also refers to the fact that legislative management is subject to the fact of qualified majority voting (QMV). In such instances, national ministers play a key role in the situation. In such instances, national ministers play a key role in such a situation, as well as the European Commission and the European Parliament (Grant & Stocker, 2009).

This chapter entailed mapping European lobby groups and their resources. Now there is a picture of which actors are active in the agricultural lobby circuit and what resources they have at their disposal. In the next chapter there will be examined what kind of interests these actors have and how they use their resources, this will be discussed in more detail.

4.5 The interests of interest groups

When the European Commission announced the new CAP in 2011 Copa-Cogeca asked for additional attention to be placed on measures to boost the profitability and productivity of the EU agricultural industry. Copa President Gerd Sonnleitner argued that the future CAP should concentrate on enhancing the financial performance of farming so that they may obtain a higher

rate of return from the market. He argued that more mandatory environmental restrictions would instead merely increase the cost of restrictions already placed on EU farmers (Dunmore, 2011). In addition, Copa-Cogeca added that the CAP was too complicated and argued for the simplification of it. They argued that the Commission obliged farmers to deliver new environmental services without any additional funds to compensate for the increased expenses. This would mean that the ability for European farmers to compete against imports from foreign countries and on the global market would only continue to deteriorate (Zahrnt, 2011). Years later, Copa-Cogeca has launched a lobby attack on the farm to fork strategy of the EU, which aims to make Europe's food system more sustainable. In 2021, documents leaked of a strategy to create an echo chamber of anti-Farm to Fork messages using studies financed by Copa-Cogeca, targeting MEPs (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2021b). When European Commissioner Frans Timmermans Farm to Fork Strategy was leaked before it was officially published, controversy sparked over the part of the proposal to end subsidies for meat commercials. The meat industry tackled the issue by putting pressure on former prime minister Paolo Gentiloni, who now is European commissioner. In the end, the part of meat commercial related subsidies was deleted from the proposal (Hakkenes, 2020).

"The amount of resources that the tobacco and agricultural industries channel into lobbying EU decision-makers place them among the most active special interests engaged in lobbying Brussels" (Chambers, 2016). An example of the agricultural lobby's efforts is when the European Commission made a decision to prohibit neonicotinoid insecticides after studies appeared in the *Science* journal that these pesticides were harming the European bee population (Whitehorn et al., 2012). That year both Bayer and Syngenta opposed the Commission's proposal on the pesticide prohibition, as evidenced by letters addressed to the European Commission. Bayer claimed that the bee population was not at risk from these pesticides based on the "absence of solid evidence" (Bayer CropScience, 2012). Syngenta stated that an "independent investigation" had found that a ban on the pesticide would cost the European agricultural sector and the overall economy billions of dollars over the years (Syngenta, 2012). According to Chambers (2016), the agricultural lobby uses scientific literature to support its claims and has tried to debunk information utilized by their opponents. However, some critics contend that the science cited by the agricultural lobby is actually "industry-friendly science" and is utilized to support its interests (Monbiot, 2013). Before the member states could vote on the proposal to ban neonicotinoid insecticides, Syngenta and Bayer ran an article on the pesticide debate in the Financial Times. Scientist Mark Walport was cited, who blamed a

specific species of mite for the bee decline and not pesticides. He asserted that "the effects of such a prohibition might be damaging to the continent's agriculture output, rural communities, and consumers." Additionally, this stance was taken by the UK government, to whom Walport was expected to offer impartial guidance to. He began by asserting, based on flawed evidence, that "bee colonies were not quantitatively harmed.", however, no necessary study was there to back it up. According to Dave Goulson, the investigation did not meet scientific standards. Instead of sending it to a peer-reviewed scientific journal, it was decided to put the article directly on the internet. Walport continued by asserting that the planned prohibition would result in "serious production losses to struggling European farmers and economies." (Monbiot, 2013).

According to Grant & Stocker (2009) Copa has always placed a high value on its strong connection with the European Commission, which may have prevented it from responding rapidly to shifting opportunity structures. Even now, it enjoys having technical specialists from the mission communicate with their colleagues there. Grant and Stocker (2009) also argue that Copa has heavily relied on its participation in the different advisory groups that are engaged in the specific function of the Common Agricultural Policy. In order to communicate with the Council of the European Union, Copa continues to use the "indirect" or "national" channel, through which member groups get in touch with the national ministers that are relevant to the policy field. According to Copa "Such connections must be founded on the shared EU-wide stances established in Copa in order to be effective". Due to their varied interests and stances, politicians take interest in political equations that can be formed through significant political deals which may harm particular national interests when matters reach the Farm Council. Despite Copa's assertions to the contrary, it does not place the same emphasis on its relationships with the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development as other institutions (Grant & Stocker, 2009).

According to Witteman (2020) The agriculture and food business has long had positive relationships with decision-makers in Brussels as well. As an illustration, take the yearly Forum for the Future of Agriculture (FFA), a premier networking occasion created by the European Landowners Organization and the world's largest manufacturer of pesticides, Syngenta, in Switzerland. In the 2018 edition, the vice-president of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans, and the then-agriculture commissioner, Phil Hogan, both spoke to the audience. The Rise Foundation, an agricultural think tank where chief sponsor Syngenta invests at least

one million euros every three years, is another organization that provides funding for these events. Former Dutch minister of land development Cees Veerman is the advocate for the oppressors. For the 2018 FFA event, the think tank is investigating, for instance, how the European meatpacking plant may set the stage for longevity. As a former Italian Minister of Agriculture and longtime leader of European agricultural policy, Paolo de Castro, an Italian Social Democratic MEP, frequently advocates on behalf of the meat sector. De Castro is a member of the Rise Foundation's board of directors at the moment. However, he is also the politician at whom many pointed earlier this year when a certain passage from the European Commission's new food strategy was abruptly removed. It centered on European subsidies for meat marketing, it was even in the draft text, but it almost appeared that Brussels would outlaw these contentious advertising expenditures. That paragraph, however, was inexplicably missing from the final blueprints when they were delivered (Witteman, 2020).

According to Nelsen (2018) many politicians in the European Parliament's agriculture committee, the committee that is responsible for the operation and development of the CAP, have business or personal links to the agricultural sector. According to research in 2018, 25 of the committee's 45 members had ties to the agricultural sector (Nelsen, 2018). They have the last decision about the tens of billions of euros that are spent annually on agricultural subsidies. They may also suggest modifications. It is apparent that many of these representatives now have access to these payments either directly or indirectly. According to Witteman (2020) agriculture-related subsidies were roughly 29,000 euros for MEP Jan Huitema in 2019. The fact that Huitema presently occupies a key position is noteworthy. He is not the front-runner as the shadow rapporteur in the Agriculture Committee, where he is a deputy member, but rather in the Environment Committee. Recently, that group has been granted increased authority over agricultural policy. Additionally, Huitema's party has a crucial position: because the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats depend on them for a majority in the European Parliament, his party members have the power to create or break proposals. For instance, the fact that the political group's position no longer includes a limit for the maximum number of cattle per hectare of agricultural land, despite internal excitement for this. According to many concerned, since Huitema gained power, it may be of crucial significance (Witteman, 2020).

Greenhouse gas emissions caused by livestock farming, which are responsible for half of the agricultural emissions in the EU, have not decreased between 2010 and 2018. In that period, the European Union has also done nothing to reduce meat and dairy consumption according to

the European Court of Auditors (2021). On the contrary, the European Union still promotes meat and dairy with marketing campaigns despite it urges its citizens to reduce its meat and dairy consumption (Boffey, 2020). The support for meat and dairy ads and the call to reduce these ads are a sensitive subject, it even led to a potential ban on certain names of meat and dairy substitutes. In 2020 the European Parliament voted to ban products that banned product names like “soymilk”, because terms like milk could only be used for dairy products. Vegetarian products that have names like “burger” in them could stay, even after a long lobby by the meat industry to change this (NOS, 2020).

To reinforce their claims about the importance of the meat industry, a group of stakeholders formed the European Livestock Voice (ELV), with the tagline Meat the facts, to support their assertions on the significance of the meat business. The influential European farmers' lobby Copa Copega, the industrial association for suppliers of foie gras, fur producers, tailors, meat manufacturers, seed and feed companies, and the veterinary pharmaceutical sector are just a few of the stakeholders. The group answers inquiries regarding issues including the connection between consuming processed and red meat and colon cancer, the environmental effects of meat alternatives, and the significance of the meat business in general (European Livestock Voice, n.d.). The writers of the paper claim that individuals are made to feel guilty about meat consumption and that various eco-myths are promoted on the Brussels news website Euractiv, where the ELV has sponsored an entire series of pieces concerning the meat business. However, the authors also admit that the truth is more complicated. According to the ELV, the debate surrounding the cattle sector has progressed to the point where "values" are being presented as "facts." They demand that conversations and debates about policy be grounded in science and reality (Witteman, 2020). Through articles like this, the meat industry tries to confuse consumers and policymakers. These kinds of tactics are also used by the tobacco industry as mentioned above by Chambers (2016). European Livestock Voice also uses think tanks such as the Animal Task Force. The think tank mainly writes about the promotion of livestock farming. “The Animal Task Force is a European Public-Private Partnership. We promote a sustainable and competitive livestock sector in Europe. We are a leading body of expertise, representing key stakeholders from industry, farmers and research from across Europe” (Animal Taskforce, n.d.).

In 2015 research institute Clingendael published a report commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate in which it became clear that think tanks such as the Animal

Task Force are given the task of influencing the European research agenda. The four topics of "resource efficiency," "responsible livestock farming systems," "healthy livestock and people," and "knowledge sharing toward innovation" are intensively advocated in Brussels as an important priority for research and innovation. These instructions were given by various companies and organizations from fourteen different member states. The organization has been actively directing research search and innovation since its founding in 2011. The organization collaborates closely with the European Commission and the European Technology Platform (ETF) and is represented in a number of its fora. The organization has started a project called "Research & Innovation for a Sustainable Livestock Sector in Europe," which focuses on important topics that need to be prioritized for the CAP reform. The organization is attempting to make a significant impact on the creation and modification of the European research agenda by combining the expertise of major actors, doing forward-looking research, providing substantial information on the website, and having active representation in Brussels (van Schaik et al., 2015). These think tanks also set the agenda in a different way. by discrediting studies published by other organizations. A scientific report released by Greenpeace was brought down on the internet medium twitter by the European Livestock Voice (European Livestock Voice, 2020). criticizing scientific articles and reports is another way to confuse policy makers and consumers and generate additional publicity for their own cause.

According to Clapp (2018) discussions regarding the sustainability of the food system should also take corporate concentration in the food system into account. Over the years, the emergence of industrial agriculture has been closely linked to the expansion of corporate concentration, and detractors claim that the environmental effects of industrial agriculture are frequently related to the expansion of corporate concentration. The increasing concentration among multinational companies promotes agricultural practices that may lessen the genetic diversity of plants and increase the usage of agrochemicals and altered seeds. However, the industry contends that increased concentration presents potential to increase agricultural sustainability. Despite the importance of corporate concentration in discussion about the development of sustainable agriculture, there is little acknowledgement of the possible link between these challenges in multilevel governance measures. Clapp contends a variety of elements combine to provide a difficult policy climate that deters the creation of governance that specifically tackles the intersection of corporate concentrations and environmental consequences in the agricultural sector. These elements are based on the ideas presented in a larger body of research on international environmental politics. They include the fact that there

is not a strong scientific agreement on how to best encourage sustainable agriculture, the weak legal requirements and institutions that oversee rules of the game and agricultural system sustainability and the big influence that the big agroindustrial players have on policy decisions (Clapp, 2018).

In the expanding number of nations that have adopted agricultural genetic engineering, genetically modified crops have taken over since the 1990s. The accessibility of conventional seed types has decreased in various areas as a result of the Big Six companies controlling an overwhelming portion of the worldwide commercial seed industry, these companies are Bayer, Monsanto, Dow, Dupont, Syngenta and BASF. In addition, it is commonly acknowledged that from the 1940s the development of modern agriculture led to a sharp growth in the use of agrochemicals, particularly pesticides. The usage of pesticides and the issue of agricultural genetic variety are not wholly unrelated, as some scientists have voiced concerns that genetic homogeneity in monocultures makes such crops more susceptible to pests and weeds and necessitates the use of chemical inputs to control infestations (Clapp, 2018). As previously said, there is broad agreement that the development of industrial agriculture has had a detrimental influence on the environment in many ways. However, there is fierce disagreement over the contribution of technology in advancing sustainable agricultural output in the future. The agroindustrial companies mainly suggest that technical improvements provide the best long-term chance for a sustainable and secure food system, they contend. Those who advocate for a drastic transition away from industrial farming toward lesser agroecological production techniques that do not depend on the external inputs offered by major agribusiness companies are in opposition to this viewpoint (Holt-Giménez & Altieri 2013). Despite the importance of this issue for the long-term sustainability of the world's food systems, there is a lack of an intergovernmental body devoted to discussing the negative environmental impacts of corporate mergers in the industry or to developing regulations on the subject. Instead, separate judgements on whether to approve the mergers are being made in each nation where those firms do business, where environmental effects are not taken into account but are mainly focused on competition related problems (ETC Group, 2017).

In light of the previous consequences of technological advancements in the industry, critics are skeptical of the corporation's claims of technical solutions for a more sustainable way for agriculture. Civil society groups have issued warnings that corporate acquisitions are likely to strengthen the integration of agrochemicals and modified seeds, providing farmers even fewer

options for inputs and firmly establishing the industrial agriculture system, making them more vulnerable. According to the Pesticide Action Network (2017) These mergers would compound industrial farming's difficulties, with severe effects for the public, farmers and farm employees, consumers, the environment, and food security. This is because They would have an undue impact on our agricultural and food system due to their dominating market share and sheer political strength. They added that reduced competition and greater market domination would further limit seed variety, jeopardize farmers' freedom of choice and right to conserve their seeds, and increase their dependency on chemical inputs. This is because reduced farming diversity and increased reliance on chemical inputs, notably harmful pesticides, would impact the ecosystem, biodiversity, and human health - both farmers' and employees' health (Pesticide Action Network Germany, 2017, Pesticide Action Network North America, 2017). Regulatory bodies are starting to pay attention to these concerns. For instance, the EU's inquiry of the Bayer-Monsanto merger in 2017 raised concerns that the combination may provide farmers less options in addition to higher pricing, worse quality and reduced innovation. It also expressed worry over the resilience of crops to currently used pesticides (European commission, 2017). Clapp (2018) argues that power dynamics play a role in the difficulty of controlling the environmental impacts of agricultural mergers at the international level. The companies involved in the mergers are in a position of power because of their special position in the food system, and they might use this influence to oppose laws that would tighten regulations on competition related concerns. For example, their potential to influence the conversation on the long-term sustainability of agriculture. According to Clapp (2018), the giant agricultural companies have utilized their press and advertising apparatus to argue that the mergers are essential to promoting sustainable agriculture through technological farming solutions. Additionally, companies also possess a second sort of power known as "structural material" power, which has the potential to have some impact on regulations. Given the size of these companies and the influence on the economy that they possess, policymakers are compelled to take their preferences into consideration.

4.6 Conflict of interest?

Companies who do business with farmers, feed merchants, abattoirs, fertilizer and pesticide makers receive the majority of the money made in agriculture. Due to the nature of their business, these frequently sizable corporations actively promote the maintenance of the present agricultural system, because that is how they receive the most income. Changing the system of

the European agricultural sector would mean for these companies that their income would decrease. When the European Union would implement stricter rules on the amount of cattle a farm could own, dairies could produce less milk. Meat processors, slaughterhouses, and livestock transporters all lose out on employment and income when there is less cattle. Reduced revenues for pesticide and fertilizer vendors are a result of more organic farming. These are big businesses that generate billions in revenue and have operations both domestically and abroad. They include chemical companies like Bayer and Syngenta, which make their money from seeds and crop protection products, dairy producers like FrieslandCampina, and sizable animal feed businesses like ForFarmers and De Heus, which are significant Dutch suppliers of livestock farming (van Dinther, 2022). The Dutch government has set aside 7.5 billion euros for the (mandatory) buy-out for livestock farmers in order to lower nitrogen emissions. The goals set forth by the European Commission as part of the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork plan are quite progressive: by 2030, a quarter of all agricultural land in the EU must be grown organically, and pesticide usage must be cut in half (Petrequin, 2022). The CEOs of big agriculture firms use public relations, lobbying, directing scientific research, and maintaining close contact with legislators to affect this (van Dinther, 2022).

However, it is exactly the strong agrarian lobbies that must act in the interests of the farmers that contribute to the upkeep of this divisive system. The fact that the powerful and rich agri-food players are also among the course-determining proponents' constituency is a significant factor in this. They also adhere to their own agenda. An excellent illustration of this is The European Livestock Voice. With Copa-Cogeca as a partner, this powerful Brussels lobby group claims to represent the interests of farmers' firms. A clever presentation, given that many politicians care deeply about this audience. However, in reality, the veterinary pharmaceutical sector, meatpackers, producers of animal feed, and exporters of meat all contribute significantly to funding this group. Their motivation is to produce as much as they can for the least amount of money, which is exactly the process that drives down market pricing for farmers. In response, the European Livestock Voice is vehemently opposing farm to fork right now (Witteman, 2021a).

This issue has arisen from this conflict of interests before. The abolition of the milk quota and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) discussions were two significant events in the previous ten years. Despite objections from its own backers, Copa-Cogeca was in support of these liberalizing actions while national agricultural farmer groups were negative

towards TTIP. These national farmer groups Farmers' associations were concerned about unfair competition, among other things. One of TTIP's objectives was to eliminate or significantly lower import duties. Import taxes remain quite high, particularly in agriculture. Opponents of the trade agreement argued that these tariffs are the only way to protect family companies that face significantly stricter environmental, animal welfare, and food hygiene regulations than their counterparts in the US. They feared that they would go under because of competition from the American market (Scharenborg, 2018). Already published studies suggested that increased commerce and production resulting in TTIP would only lower farmers' earnings, like a study from Wageningen University (van Berkum, 2008; Sarmadi, 2016). Yet, Copa-Cogeca disregarded further research on the subject matter. The industry suggested the implementation of more intensification and larger farms, which ultimately did not lead to the desired effect.

Who will pay for the costs of increasing the agriculture sector's sustainability is currently one of the most urgent challenges and a hot debate. Measures such as a meat tax are not seen by LTO and COPA as the right measures and are therefore harshly criticized on their own channels. LTO does not consider a meat tax to be the intended method of shaping sustainability. They emphasize that the efforts of the whole chain, from primary producer to processor and retailer, contribute to the quality and sustainability of the European market economy. In the statement, they put the burden on the consumer, who would keep the system going by buying cheap meat. Furthermore, LTO claims that there are several practical legal and administrative problems. Questioning if the Tax and Customs Administration can implement the planned levies and compensation in the short term without completely overhauling the system. As a result, the LTO believes that collecting consumption tax on meat and dairy from supermarkets, the catering sector, butcher shops, and so on will be difficult to achieve in practice. According to the farmer's advocate, the suggested compensation for both consumers and farmers would be difficult to implement and would also require a lot of effort, administrative expenditures, and hence a loss of money for farmers (Lesscher, 2019).

According to Copa-Cogeca meat tax is a bad idea because imposing such tariffs on daily consumer goods has never shown to be efficient, as stated in an opinion article. According to the writer, meat is a staple product whose demand is not extremely responsive to price swings. They add that taxing meat would be perceived as an injustice, denying lower-income people access to an essential component of a healthy diet. This could be seen as a double sting for individuals who are already suffering after the Covid pandemic. Alternatives for meat will also

not be the solution according to Copa-Cogeca, stating that these are in many cases, highly processed products, offering much higher margins to a handful of industry representatives. They also argue that a high percentage of agricultural land in Europe is not fit for planting crops, as this would be too difficult and expensive from an environmental and climate standpoint. A meat tax would disadvantage livestock producers who are the ones who are heavily investing in adjusting their methods to climatic, environmental, and animal well-being needs in the areas. And this despite their salary being far lower than that of the rest of society. Resulting that the production of meat would only leak away to “third world” countries (Healy, 2020).

According to the Corporate Europe Observatory (2021a), over the years, Copa-Cogeca as well as its partners have served as the CAP's informal co-managers along state farm ministries and the European Commission's DG Agriculture. Consequently, today's EU agriculture policies are largely the result of their political lobbying since they have significant sway over national and EU policymakers. In 2021 Copa-Cogeca criticized the first draft of the proposed farm to fork strategy of the European Parliament's committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development. Copa-Cogeca wanted to scrap the part of the first draft that said “currently, the food system is responsible for a range of impacts on human and animal health and on the environment, the climate and biodiversity” (Copa-Cogeca, 2021). In total, Copa-Cogeca proposes 19 amendments and additions to the draft of the European Parliament. These include changes that deny the agricultural sector's role in climate change and increased support for European farmers, agri-cooperatives and other operators in the food chain. In addition, a proposal is made for the use of technical innovation in the agricultural sector and that these innovations should not be inhibited, an argument that is often used by the agricultural lobby. Copa-Cogeca sought to prevent the CAP from being in line with the EU's Green Deal, particularly the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies. This was done to assure that the highest EU budget of all would remain the same (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2021a) In order to support these revisions, interest groups conducted their own investigations, such as a study by the University of Wageningen that was funded by Croplife Europe and other agri-food industries, as well as a report produced by the University of Kiel that was commissioned by the grain industry (Henning & Witzke, 2021; Jongeneel, 2021; Witteman, 2021a). Copa-Cogeca claims that the research demonstrates that the Farm to Fork objectives will have a significant impact with minimal environmental gain and maybe adverse effects for farmers or consumers. However, according to Christian Henning, a professor at the

University of Kiel who oversaw the research, the study's findings suggest that the Farm to Fork plan is really moving in the right direction and helping both farmers and the rest of society. Because of the output limitations, cattle producers in particular will be able to make significantly more money, according to the methods he utilized. When questioned about it, he responds, "The Green Deal is potentially a win-win situation for society, since the benefits offset the losses sustained via decreasing traditional agriculture production." Henning points out that commerce and agribusiness are the major problems, and until they switch to more sustainable business models, they will suffer the consequences (Witteman, 2021a)

It is notable that Dutch organizations that have benefited from the largest agricultural subsidies since 2014 were not small farmers. No regular farmer can be found among the top 50. Larger businesses and organizations are the biggest recipients. Cooperatives make up the majority of the top 20. The European Union's initiatives to unite farmers have benefited some of them. The cooperatives are entirely reliant on European financial assistance. Because despite their substantial revenue, it mostly benefits the associated members (Homolová et al., 2022).

4.7 The effects on Dutch agriculture

The previous chapters dealt with which lobby groups there are and how they use their power and resources to influence the policy making of European agricultural policy and how they exerted this influence to water down greener agricultural policy. This chapter will provide more clarity on what effect these less ambitious plans have had on national agricultural policies and how this in turn affected biodiversity and greenhouse gas emissions. Because countries were allowed to set their own greening targets, the outcomes of the CAP differ per country. In this part there will be a look at how the greening measures have manifested themselves in the Netherlands. It concerns the amount of Ecological Focus Areas, agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity rates. In 2016, 40.5503 farmers in the Netherlands were obliged to accomplish one of these greening measures. These are about two-thirds of the farmers, and they manage 90 percent of the agricultural area in the Netherlands (Van Doorn & Smidt, 2017).

As said above, Ecological Focus Areas are areas of farmland where agricultural practices have a positive influence on biodiversity and the climate. For Ecological Focus Areas there is a weighing factor for different kinds of measures that can be taken in these areas, ranked between

0 and 1. Unattended field edges where the ground is not mowed or grazed, has a weighing factor of 1, meaning it is the most valuable measure for Ecological Focus Areas. The sowing of catch crops in the ground that absorb nitrogen which is left in the soil has a weighing factor of 0,7. The sowing of normal catch crops has the least positive effect on nature and biodiversity and has a weighing factor of 0,3. Van Doorn & Smidt (2017) concluded that in 2016, 18 percent of farmers had an EFA-obligation, this is 37% percent of the agricultural land of the Netherlands. Taking into account that 90 percent of farmers have chosen for sowing in catch crops, the weighing factor of 0,3 comes into place. This results in around 9% of the farmers that had an EFA-obligation did meet the requirements of this measure, meaning the guideline of 5% Ecological Focus Areas has been achieved in the Netherlands (Van Doorn & Smidt, 2017). Regardless of achieving this 5% guideline, a caveat must be made. The biggest part of participating farmers has chosen for a production-based completion of the EFA-obligation, the sowing of catch crops. This means that there have been some positive impacts to the soil but there has been zero to little positive impact on biodiversity rates, even though this obligation was destined for biodiversity unattended field edges would have been better for biodiversity rates, but very few farmers have chosen for this kind of measure (Underwood & Tucker, 2016).

The permanent grasslands, which are destined to be left alone for at least 5 years, were implemented to make sure the number of permanent grasslands in the Netherlands would not decrease by more than 5% in comparison with the number of permanent grasslands the Netherlands had in 2012 (RvO Nederland, 2021). In 2012, the number of permanent grasslands was 718,692 hectares which accounts for 40,6% of the area of total farmland, in 2016 it was 690.000 hectares which accounts for 40,5% of the area. Meaning that there has been a decrease of 0,1 percent, which is less than the allowed 5% maximum. Around 50.000 hectares of permanent grasslands lay in the “Natura 2000-areas”, an European network of nature reserves where endangered plants and animals live and are protected. Yet, from 2015 to 2016, the number of permanent grasslands in these areas decreased from 51.000 hectares to 49.000 hectares even though these grasslands are not supposed to be touched (Van Doorn & Smidt, 2017).

For crop diversification around 14.000 farmers in the Netherlands have to rotate their crops, which is around 21% of the farmers, they manage around 40% of the agricultural land in the Netherlands. Farmers who own between 10 and 30 hectares have to rotate two crops; farmers who own more than 30 hectares have to rotate three crops. This has not made any difference in

a more diverse set of crops because most (if not all) farmers already alternate their crops yearly. In this category nothing has changed in the general management of the agricultural sector. This means that a big part of the farmers who had to rotate their crops or had to keep permanent grasslands did not have to take any greening action in order to receive extra subsidy (Van Doorn & Smidt, 2017).

Dutch agriculture was responsible for 25,6 percent of the total greenhouse gas emissions in the Netherlands in 2014, this was in the year the new Common Agricultural Policy went into effect. The new CAP had as a goal that the amount of greenhouse gas emissions by the agricultural sector had to be reduced. In the end, total EU emissions did not go down, the Netherlands was no exception in this. In 2020 Dutch agriculture was responsible for 26,2 percent of the total greenhouse gas emissions of the Netherlands, meaning it had even increased by 0,6 percent. The biggest part of these emissions is caused by cattle breeding and the use of manure, which is around 68 percent (CBS, n.d.).

Europe's biodiversity is declining, this trend has been going on for a very long time. Compared to the rest of Europe and the world, the Netherlands has very poor levels of biodiversity (Compendium voor de Leefomgeving, 2013). Since 2014 there has been no change in the downward trend of biodiversity levels in the Netherlands, animals that are characteristic to agricultural areas have been no exception to this. In six years, the biodiversity rates in agricultural areas have declined with about 4% of the 45 animals included in the list, 25 species have declined and 11 have improved. Especially farmland birds and butterflies in particular have declined as a group. Because of the intensification and production increase of Dutch agriculture the farmland where these animals live are eutrophicated and desiccated. Because of this intensification and monocultures, nectar plants, food, shelters, and nesting places disappear with the result that the reproduction of animals in agricultural areas has decreased sharply (Compendium voor de leefomgeving, 2022).

The second pillar of the cap, destined for rural development, was subsidized with 260 million euros in 2020 with the programma voor plattelandsontwikkeling (POP). Since 2016, regional agricultural collectives have been responsible for agricultural nature conservation. According to David Kleijn (2021) of Wageningen University the bottleneck lies in the fact that the membership of these regional agricultural collectives is voluntary, meaning that the subsidies are received by farmers who are enthusiastic for this. The subsidies don't reach farmers who

are not part of such a collective, but where the impact of nature conservation could be much higher, meaning the efficiency of these subsidies decreases.

4.8 Empirical evidence according to the theories

One could argue that the forming of the CAP was an overly ambitious plan of the European Commission which was partly toned down by member states; this leans more towards liberal intergovernmentalism. However, it can be said that this is not due to the Member States but to an international lobby set up by major agricultural players like Bayer, BASF and Copa-Cogeca. One could argue that MEPs' policy making is not fueled by a national interest but is more often a consequence of these agricultural lobbies. The presence of these lobby groups and their influence on European policy are in line with Haas's theory of neofunctionalism. This is because the influence of these interest groups is a consequence of an increasing organization developing bureaucratic self-interests, which could be said about the ambitious agenda that the European Commission had for the CAP. The pressure that these international lobby groups have on national governments is another reason why one could say neofunctionalism fits according to the seen effects. This is because the national preferences formed by national governments are influenced by these groups. In the Netherlands, for example, this is done by the LTO, an association that stands up for the interests of farmers and horticulturists. LTO is a member of Copa-Cogeca, and through Copa-Cogeca, LTO can pressure national actors into action (Witteaman, 2021a). In addition, there are large national companies in the Netherlands that have an interest in intensive livestock farming and keeping the Common Agricultural Policy as it is now. These are dairy producers such as FrieslandCampina and animal feed producers such as ForFarmers and de Hees that make more profit when livestock farming becomes more intensive.

Agriculture plays a less and less important role for national GDP around the European Union. Bednaříková & Jílková (2012) state that when a sector, like agriculture, is experiencing a relative decrease in importance as a result of economic development, the greater the pressure for support and protection becomes. Because farmers have been dependent on subsidies for so long, the greater the resistance for its removal or change. They state that the reason the farmers lobby is so successful has three reasons, firstly, the lobby is based on the unity and similarities farmers have, being a small and relatively homogenous group. Secondly, they are very strongly represented and can count on the sympathy of the electorate. And thirdly, their ability to

emphasize the importance of agriculture in society and the national and international political economy. Because of this reason, the agricultural lobby is such an effective organization (Bednaříková & Jílková, 2012).

In the case of the interest groups framework versus the institutions framework the right question is to ask how much influence these interest groups really have in the decision-making process for a policy such as the CAP. Kay (2000) concludes that from 1985 till 2000 interest groups have had a significant influence on the CAP reform, but states that their influence is declining. What must be noted is that Kay based his premises on an older form of the Common Agricultural Policy, and other things are at stake now. The increasing amount of environmental and climate rules has sparked the agricultural lobby and their influence is notably present, in addition we can conclude that the number of interest groups is rising. However, the EU institutions draw up and enforce rules, they are very dependent on interest groups to enforce them (McCormick, 2020). In addition, empirical evidence has shown that individual MEPs allow themselves to be influenced by self-interest or a lobby group that is set up nationally or internationally. This can be seen in the farm to fork strategy and the ban of names like soymilk. Although lobby organizations in the European Union and at the national level in principle do not have decision-making power, they do use other means to exercise power in order to influence policy. These lobby groups are very good at seeking out the media to make their voices heard. In addition, their representatives are very present in the political system of the European Union, and this is reinforced by the relations they maintain with officials of the EU, among other things by meeting them personally in private meetings. So according to Lukes (2021), it could be said that these groups lack decision making power but have a great influence in the term of agenda setting, in determining what the dialogue is about through meetings and advertising campaigns. In addition, large multinational companies active in the agricultural sector often have the financial means to place themselves in the public debate through advertisements, this money can also be used to fund scientific research that should strengthen their interests.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

This paper has researched and analyzed how agricultural interest groups use their lobbying power to influence policy making of the Common Agricultural Policy. The following research question was formulated to find out these lobby and interest groups use their influence to exert the shaping of this policy:

What influence do agricultural interest groups have on the Common Agricultural Policy and how did this affect European agriculture from 2014 till 2020?

The Common Agricultural Policy has a direct influence on agricultural policy in the European Union. If the CAP has strict greening measures, this will also have an effect on the agricultural policy of member states. This means, for example, how much greenhouse gasses may come from agriculture, the amount of nitrogen emissions and the use of pesticides. This in turn has an effect on climate change and the degree of biodiversity in European countries. Some agricultural interest groups have a greater interest in a less strict agricultural policy because it provides them with more income than a stricter agricultural policy. The question remains whether agricultural interest groups actually have this power to adjust policy. To answer this research question, a hypothesis was formed based on Kay's Institution framework and Interest groups framework. Based on these frameworks the following hypothesis was formed:

Agricultural interest groups will use their influence to shape the Common Agricultural Policy when it is modified against their interests.

To analyze how the Common Agricultural Policy is formed there has been taken a look at various theories on power, lobbying and the support of the agricultural sector in politics and society. Through theories about power in international politics and the role of lobby groups an explanation has been given for the empirical evidence that exists about lobbying activities in the European Union. The two frameworks that were used were the Institutions framework versus the Interest framework, which have a different opinion on the power of lobby groups in the policy making of the Common Agricultural Policy. The interest groups framework emphasizes the effect that interest groups have on the decision-making in the reforming of the

CAP. The institution's framework emphasizes that the relevant institutions of the European Union have a more important role in shaping the Common Agricultural Policy.

Empirical evidence has shown that individual members of the European Parliament and national ministers of agriculture are influenced by national lobbies, which are partly coordinated by international farmers' lobbies and the major agro-industrial players such as Copa-Cogeca and Bayer. They use their monetary means for advertising campaigns, which can be seen as a form of agenda setting. Money is also used to fund scientific research whose outcome is in favor of this industry, and they can use this as an argument. In addition, these lobby groups are deeply rooted in the political system of the European Union and have personal ties to its officials. When looking at the empirical evidence, this study considers it plausible that the stated hypothesis can be accepted. This is because there is enough empirical evidence to show that agricultural interest groups conducted an intensive lobbying campaign between 2010 and 2020 when the European Union wanted to adopt measures for a more sustainable agriculture, such as around the introduction of the CAP 2014 and the farm to fork strategy. Because of this reason this research considers that the Interest group framework fits better with the realization of the Common Agricultural Policy of 2014 (and the Farm to Fork strategy). This means that in answer to the research question it is stated that agricultural interest groups have a major influence on the common agricultural policy of 2014-2020 and this has had the effect that European agriculture has not become greener in these years. This is because empirical evidence shows that after the first plans of the European Commission a huge farmers' lobby got going and this has continued over the years, affecting the Common Agricultural Policy and the Farm to Fork strategy. Yet, the agricultural interest groups group does not appear to be as close as it turns out, there is a difference in interest between the parties. Although some organizations seem to represent the interests of farmers, they seem to have their own agendas.

The EU wants to be a carbon neutral continent in 2050, more than 10 percent of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions comes from agriculture. The Common Agricultural Policy, which influences EU agricultural policy, plays a big role in these emissions. The Common Agricultural Policy of 2014-2020 was proposed as a way to green European Agriculture and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In the end, agricultural greenhouse gas emissions did not reduce and biodiversity rates in European countries did not increase. Ambitious plans put forward by the European Commission were watered down by a strong agricultural lobby and agro-industrial companies advocating for less strict regulations on pesticides and sustainability.

For the Netherlands specifically, most farmers complied with their EFA-obligation, but in the end, biodiversity did not increase because the measures they took were not effective enough. The permanent grasslands stayed roughly the same, however in the Natura 2000-areas they decreased a little. Crop diversification was also not an effective measure of this because farmers were already doing this and therefore did not change the status quo. Dutch greenhouse gas emissions that were related to agriculture also did not decrease, it even increased a little, this is mainly due to the fact that the number of livestock in the Netherlands has not decreased. Biodiversity also kept declining in the six years of the CAP, especially the meadow bird and butterfly populations are very affected and show no change in this trend for the time being.

In the end it can be concluded that the Common Agricultural Policy has not had the desired sustainability effect on European agriculture. Agricultural interest groups have had a significant influence on this. The European Union has not been able to arm itself against an agricultural lobby. Now, it is 2022, and a new agricultural policy will soon be introduced. The question remains what effect the new policy will have on European agriculture, time will tell.

5.2 Reflection

This research is focused on the Common Agricultural Policy and how agricultural interest groups play a role in its policy making. This research has significance for Kay's frameworks, theories on European integration and theories on power in international relations. The empirical evidence has shown what kinds of power interest groups use in negotiations and what kind of influence they exert in shaping European policy, with the CAP as a specific example. Regarding Kay's framework it can be said that the empirical evidence of lobby group activity surrounding the Common Agricultural Policy corroborates with what the interest groups framework indicates. Because the two frameworks form a contradiction, it was decided to choose the most appropriate theory/framework on the basis of empirical evidence. Regarding the study's analytical scope, there have been some restrictions as well. The choice for mainly secondary sources is partly a forced choice. This is because it is beyond this research' ability to conduct interviews with relevant actors, this being EU officials and agro(-industrial) representatives. In order to mitigate this limitation as well as possible, a systematic literature review and document analysis was carried out in which more than a hundred articles were consulted, many more than are present in the references but not all of them turned out to be suitable for this stud. In this way, the validity was maintained in this research. This is ground

for further research. Future research into the influence of lobby groups in the policy making of the Common Agricultural Policy will have to look at which individual players are crucial in this game and may provide more clarity about the influence of lobby groups. In addition, follow-up research can determine whether the influence of agricultural interest groups also applies to the new common agricultural policy.

6. References

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