Green Deal means lower farm yields

The implementation of the EU's Green Deal will lead to a reduction in agricultural production in Europe, higher imports and higher prices, according to scenario calculations by agricultural economists at Wageningen.

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The European Commission's aim with the Green Deal is to combat climate change and environmental harm caused by agriculture. To assess what becoming greener will mean for crop production, the Wageningen economists studied 25 farms across Europe to see what changes the farmers would need to make to satisfy the sustainability requirements. They focused in particular on the reduction of crop protection agents – usage of which must be halved by 2030 – and the more restricted use of fertilizer.

The researchers entered the results in economic models to calculate the effects on the production of various scenarios, for example in the share of organic farming. If all the measures studied were implemented, it would lead to an average fall in production of 10 to 20 per cent. But there are big differences: sugar beet cultivation would hardly be affected whereas apple production would decline by 30 per cent.

All in all, the measures would lead to rising prices for farm products. The researchers also expect quality problems, for example grain becoming unfit for consumption due to fungi or smaller apples with damaged skin.

'If demand remains the same, Europe will have to make up the difference by increasing imports,' says author Johan Bremmer of Wageningen Economic Research. 'That will have negative effects on the European trade balance as exports will fall and imports will rise.'

The study was commissioned by CropLife, an organization representing the interests of crop protection product manufacturers.

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