



# EXTERNAL CONVERGENCE, REDISTRIBUTIVE PAYMENTS AND COUPLED SUPPORT UNDER THE CAP 2023–2027: ROMANIA FACTS

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**Abstract:** *This paper analyses three Pillar I instruments of the 2023–2027 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)—external convergence, complementary redistributive income support for sustainability (CRISS), and voluntary coupled support (VCS)—with a focus on Romania. Although external convergence has improved Romania’s position, direct payments per hectare remain below the EU average. CRISS and VCS support small farms and vulnerable livestock sectors, but their impact is constrained by fragmentation, low productivity, weak market integration, and limited modernization. The paper argues that fairer support must be matched by stronger investment in competitiveness and institutional capacity.*

## • Introduction

The CAP Strategic Plans provide the framework for implementing the Common Agricultural Policy in 2023–2027. Romania is a key case because it has one of the most polarized farm structures in the EU: 2.859 million holdings farm 12.55 million ha, with an average size of 4.39 ha. Small farms below 1 ha represent 53.6% of all holdings, while farms above 50 ha account for just 1.0% but control 53.1% of utilised agricultural area. This dual structure makes direct-payment design particularly important.

## • Results and discussions

External convergence has improved Romania’s position, but the gap with the EU average remains. Planned direct payments per hectare remain below the EU average and below several Western Member States, reflecting both the limits of convergence and Romania’s large agricultural area. CRISS redirects support toward smaller holdings, while VCS allocates relatively high support to vulnerable sectors such as cattle, sheep, and certain crops. The coexistence of very small farms, large commercial holdings, and fragile livestock sectors makes direct-payment design particularly complex.

**Table 1. Planned direct payment levels for selected EU Member States, 2027**

Member State	Total direct payments, 2027, €/ha	Position relative to EU average
Romania	204 €/ha	Below EU average
France	268 €/ha	Slightly above EU average
Germany	248 €/ha	Below EU average
Spain	232 €/ha	Below EU average
Italy	348 €/ha	Above EU average
Poland	252 €/ha	Below EU average
EU Average	261 €/ha	Reference value

Source: European Commission, Approved 28 CAP Strategic Plans 2023–2027, Figure 14.

## • Material and method

The paper uses a comparative descriptive approach based on European Commission documents, the Romania CAP Strategic Plan factsheet, ASA 2023 structural data, and recent academic literature. It compares Romania with France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Poland, selected for their policy relevance, contrasting farm structures, and significant CAP envelopes. The analysis focuses on direct payment allocations, payments per hectare, CRISS and VCS design, and structural indicators relevant to redistribution.

## • Conclusions

Romania’s experience under the 2023–2027 CAP shows the limits of distributive reform in a context of deep structural inequality. External convergence has improved the country’s position, but not enough to close the gap with the EU average. CRISS is important in Romania, yet it cannot replace land consolidation and modernization, while VCS remains necessary for vulnerable sectors but needs better targeting. A more balanced transition requires continued EU-level convergence, stronger redistribution, and structural investment in productivity, generational renewal, and professional farm management.