PRESS RELEASE – CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

**EU Common Agricultural Policy must become a “Common Sustainable Food Policy”, says new report**

The European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) needs to become a “Common Sustainable Food Policy” to remain relevant for the 21st century, according to a new report from the Food Research Collaboration.

The briefing paper, *Does the CAP still fit?*, argues that policy makers need to address and integrate currently disparate food issues alongside agricultural matters. These issues include carbon reduction, water conservation, food waste reduction, public health and consumer satisfaction.

The authors – Professor Alison Bailey, Professor Tim Lang and Dr Victoria Schoen – say this overarching approach is necessary for the UK as well as Europe, regardless of the outcome of the country’s referendum on EU membership.

In addition to laying out options for the future direction of CAP, the paper reviews its history, purpose, impact, finances and changes over time.

The authors argue that the CAP, far from being stuck, has been continuously reformed since it was introduced as a response to post-war food insecurity in 1962. But they say the food system of today is very different, with food service a much larger employer than farming.

*Does the CAP still fit?* is the third paper on the links between UK food and the EU to be published by the Food Research Collaboration (FRC), an initiative of the Centre for Food Policy at City University London funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

**Key points in the report include:**

* The CAP has gone through at least seven rounds of reform since it began in 1962.
* The Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development in Brussels has only 1,000 civil servants, yet accounts for over a third of the total EU budget. Defra in the UK has 2,000 for England alone.
* Although considerably below the 70% seen in the 1980s, the CAP now absorbs less than 40% of the EU budget and this is set to decline further.
* In the UK, farmers receive only £10 billion of the £198 billion that UK consumers spend on food per year. Many farmers rely on the additional income from subsidies to keep them in farming.
* Four broad options about CAP’s purpose and preparations for the next phase of reform are explored in which CAP: (a) weakens significantly; (b) evolves pragmatically; (c) becomes a rural development policy; or (d) becomes a “Common (Sustainable) Food Policy”.

The CAP has changed, cut subsidies and is a major funder of environmental gains – the report summarises these rounds of reform and what has motivated them. The authors state that not all reforms have been beneficial, CAP has “many problems” and it must be changed “radically”.

The paper also states that the evidence for overhauling international food systems is “overwhelming” but the public health impact of farm output is not taken seriously enough. The authors argue “politicians and policy makers seem unable to grasp the enormity of what needs to change”.

**Professor Tim Lang, of the Centre for Food Policy at City University London and senior advisor to the FRC, said:**

*“CAP has been the butt of jokes and myths about inefficient Europe. In fact, CAP has constantly changed over the last 60 years. Our critique is that, today, it is still too focused on farming when it needs to be reconnected with public health, ecosystems and feeding people well. Whether the UK is in or out of the EU, these goals are needed.*

*“CAP should become a Common Sustainable Food Policy. This is what the scientific evidence suggests. The problem is that policy-makers are either too hesitant or dazzled by a belief that technology will resolve future food problems. They cannot. Food culture also needs to change.”*

**Dr Victoria Schoen, Research Fellow for the FRC, said:**

*“The CAP has certainly taken us away from a post-war situation of food insecurity and has attempted to adapt over time – now a serious realignment of policy objectives with farm, food and rural realities is needed to maintain a healthy, sustainable food system in the future.”*

**Professor Alison Bailey, of Lincoln University in New Zealand (formerly at the University of Reading), said:**

*"What is required now of the CAP is a return to the focus on why it was introduced in the first place – the provision of food whilst being mindful of how that food is produced, supporting the producers, providing adequate nutrition for consumers, whilst maintaining animal welfare standards and protecting the environment."*

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

The briefing paper, *Does the CAP still fit?*, will be published on the FRC website on Thursday 9th June, 2016: <http://foodresearch.org.uk/>

Journalists can download a copy of the paper here: [XXXXX](http://foodresearch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/horticulture-briefing-final-22-March.pdf)

For more information, contact Ed Grover at City University London: [ed.grover@city.ac.uk](mailto:ed.grover@city.ac.uk); 0207 040 3062.

**The Food Research Collaboration (FRC)** is an initiative of the Centre for Food Policy at City University London, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The FRC facilitates joint working amongst and between academics and civil society organisations (CSOs) to improve the UK food system. It is a unique collaboration of 500 academic and CSO members.

It is both located at and managed by the Centre for Food Policy. The initiative is overseen and guided by a steering group and advisory panel of academics and civil society specialists.

On 1st April 2016, Professor Corinna Hawkes became the new Chair of the FRC and the new Director of the Centre for Food Policy. She took over both roles from Professor Tim Lang, who continues to works at the Centre for Food Policy on a part-time basis.

<http://foodresearch.org.uk/>