

# EU Transparency

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## Projects

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### FarmSubsidy.org

Subsidies paid to farmers and others under the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy amount to approximately €55 billion a year, more than 40% of European Union's entire annual budget, or around €100 a year for each EU citizen. Farmsubsidy.org helps people find out who gets what, and why.

Gathered using citizens rights to access government information FarmSubsidy.org aggregates payments and recipients of farm subsidies in every EU member state. The project has brought together journalists, analysts and campaigners in more than ten countries. You can [read a short newspaper article](#) about the history of the project and its big successes.

[Visit FarmSubsidy.org](#)

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### FishSubsidy.org

FishSubsidy.org aims to make sense of the €1 billion a year in subsidies paid to owners of fishing vessels and others working in the fishing industry. The fishsubsidy.org project is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-profit based in the United States of America.

### About EU Transparency.org

EU Transparency is a non-profit organisation which mixes journalism, data and the web to shed light on how European Union institutions and policies are working.

### Recent posts

- [Commission proposes major improvements to transparency in EU fisheries subsidies](#)
- [Civil society common position on transparency in farm subsidies](#)
- [Court ruling won't stop disclosure of farm subsidies in Sweden](#)
- [Initial reaction to ECJ ruling](#)

## Media law

# So that's where the £100 billion went

A freedom of information campaign by journalists across Europe has paid off in spectacular fashion

**David Hencke**

The Guardian, Sunday 21 January 2007

Over the next two years a ground-breaking decision by the council of ministers and the European Parliament will result in the biggest release of information held by governments to the public and the media since the creation of the European Union.

All 27 EU countries will disclose data revealing details of some €100bn given in subsidies by the Eurotaxpayer every year to farmers, food companies, industrial regeneration schemes and the fishing industry, from the Black Sea resorts in Bulgaria and Romania to the Canary Islands and Madeira.

The decision is the result of a rare example of journalists cooperating with each other across Europe to bring pressure on the governments of member states, using national freedom of information laws.

The data that will be released next year and in 2009 has been among the secrets most strongly guarded by national governments, who have used privacy and data protection laws to prevent people finding out the main recipients of the Euro largesse. The reason - as has become clear as the information has dribbled out - is to protect from unwanted publicity not poverty-stricken hill farmers but huge multinationals such as Tate & Lyle and the Danish Arla group (which owns Express Dairies), powerful politicians, and royals from the Queen and Prince Charles to the Grimaldis in Monaco. For they are emerging as the biggest beneficiaries under the information already released.

The idea that all this should become public originated in 2000 - not from a journalist but from a Labour special adviser, Jack Thurston, who worked for Nick Brown, then agriculture minister. One afternoon, fed up with a rather tedious EU agriculture negotiation, Brown demanded from his permanent secretary, Sir Richard Packer, a list of the top 20 people getting all these EU subsidies. After much trepidation Sir Richard produced the list and allowed the minister to glance at it for 10 minutes. Thurston remembers looking over his shoulder and seeing the royals and multinationals heading the list.

When Brown asked to take it away, the request was refused and he was warned that to publish such information breached the Data Protection Act. After Thurston left his job he wrote a pamphlet for the Foreign Policy Centre think-tank challenging the need for the subsidies and calling for the details to be published. At the same time, a Danish journalist, Nils Mulvad, used a provision under the Danish freedom of information act to demand the release of documents sent to the tax authorities that listed EU subsidy payments. At the third attempt, in 2004, he won his case and Denmark became the first country in the EU to release subsidy payment data. Last year he was voted European Journalist of the Year in European Voice's awards.

Three months after the Danish ruling Britain's FOI Act became operational on January 2, 2005. On the day the act became law the Guardian joined the Foreign Policy Centre to demand the release of all subsidies in England and Northern Ireland (Scotland and Wales had separate jurisdiction). While the Guardian was publicly demanding the information, Thurston was using his Labour connections to press Margaret Beckett, then agriculture secretary, and Larry Whitty, the farms minister, and advisers to Gordon Brown, to concede. The government agreed and Britain became the first big member of the EU to release the information.

By May through the offices of the German Marshall Fund, another think-tank, a meeting in Brussels united journalists from Britain, Denmark, Sweden, Holland, Germany and Spain, among others to share information. What followed was the establishment of the website farmsubsidy.org, which publishes articles from journalists revealing grants as each country has been pushed into naming who gets the cash.

Some countries fell after spectacular events - Holland decided to release the information after the Dutch agriculture minister, Cees Veerman, was exposed for not revealing to Parliament that he was taking EU subsidies for farms he owned in the Dordogne. Others, like Slovenia, volunteered to release everything when they joined the EU. Journalists in Sweden, Finland and Norway, which is not even an EU member, have forced their governments to release data. And transnational journalism meant that Arla was revealed to have received more in EU subsidies through Denmark, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Holland, than from profits it made.

It was this background that led the EU Commission to go for releasing details of every subsidy it gave. By the time it agreed to take such a historic step, countries were falling like dominoes as journalists forced the release of information under FOI laws. Germany is the latest.

Thurston says: "Journalists have been central. Without them all we would have is raw data. It is journalists, who have the local knowledge about the people and companies who receive the money, who turn the information into stories which people can relate to - therefore making government more accountable to the people who pay for these subsidies."

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# Jack Thurston

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## About

I am a London-based policy analyst, activist, writer and broadcaster.

Germany's [Focus magazine](#) described me as “a political long-distance runner”. Tory blogger [Guido Fawkes](#) once referred to me as “one of early New Labour's more cerebral types”.

Most of my public policy work today relates to transparency, freedom of information and government accountability, principally through projects that help people to find out how Europe's [farm subsidies](#) and [fish subsidies](#) are spent. Both projects have a strong link to food, environment and quality of life policy – and that's where my greatest personal interest lies.

For my work on [farmsubsidy.org](#) I won a Freedom of Information Award from [Investigative Reporters and Editors](#) and the website was cited by [Politics Online's](#) Top 10 Who Are Changing the World of Internet and Politics and by [WorldChanging.com](#) as “demonstrating the power of geek activism done right”.

I blog about EU agriculture policy at [capreform.eu](#). This website is where the slim pickings of other stuff lives, as well as various articles.

In 2005 I founded [EU Transparency](#), a very small non-profit organisation that runs [farmsubsidy.org](#) and [fishsubsidiy.org](#) and which has (so far) been funded by grants from philanthropic foundations. Previously I have had jobs in Parliament and Whitehall and in think tanks. I've a degree in PPE from Oxford University a masters in public policy analysis from UC Berkeley where I was a Fulbright Scholar.

I enjoy listening to the radio and riding a bicycle, though not usually at the same time. I combine passions for both in [The Bike Show](#), a usually weekly radio programme about cycling that I have presented most weeks on London's experimental art radio station [Resonance 104.4 fm](#) since 2004.

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# Jack Thurston

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## Projects

These are some of the other things I've been doing lately:

### **farmsubsidy.org**

Journalists, researchers and activists working together to find out who gets what from the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy. See also the sister project [fishsubsidy.org](#).

### **The Bike Show**

A weekly half-hour radio show devoted to the art, politics, science and transcendental pleasure of riding a bicycle. Broadcast on London's best radio station [Resonance 104.4 fm](#).

### **History of Waterloo**

I agree with Geoffrey Fletcher that 'a man can do everything better in London – think better, eat and cheat better, even enjoy the country better'.

A few years ago I made a 45-minute documentary film about the streets in London where I live, drawing on historical archives and the recollections of people who've been living on the street since as far back as the 1930s. Why did William Blake come here to stargaze? Why has Waterloo always been home to the performing arts? What was it like here during the Blitz? And what on earth is a bag wash shop? Find out by watching [A Village on a Street](#).

Listen to a podwalk (audio guided walk) of the 'backstreets of Southwark' that I did for the 2008 London Festival of Architecture.

I'm currently working on a digital restoration of a **History of Waterloo** 'tape slide show' made by Michael Bruce in the early 1980s.

Search

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€221.4 billion in payments to 21938181 recipients

e.g. [Nestle](#) or [Windsor](#)

## Welcome to farmsubsidy.org!

The European Union spends around €55 billion a year on farm subsidies. This website helps people find out who gets what, and why.

## Latest news & reports from the farmsubsidy.org network

### [New privacy rules keep 92% of Common Agricultural Policy beneficiaries secret](#)

Farmsubsidy.org estimates that fewer than one in ten beneficiaries of EU farm subsidies has been published this year. The total value of payments published is ...

### [New funding](#)

New funding secures farmsubsidy.org's future as a data journalism project for the next two years.

### [Let The Sunshine In](#)

We're calling for new rules to increase transparency in farm subsidies. Will you add your voice to our campaign?

## What people are saying about farmsubsidy.org

*"A valuable public service"*- Mark Halle, Global Subsidies Initiative

*"Dogged work"*- The Guardian

## All Time Top Recipients

[TEREOS](#)  
[SAINT LOUIS SUCRE S.A.](#)  
[KRAJOWA SPÓŁKA CUKROWA](#)  
[SPÓŁKA AKCYJNA](#)  
[AZUCARERA EBRO, S. L.](#)  
[RAFFINERIE TIRLEMONTTOISE -](#)  
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## About

### What's all this about?

Subsidies paid to farmers and others under the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy amount to approximately €55 billion a year, more than 40% of European Union's entire annual budget, or around €100 a year for each EU citizen.

Farmsubsidy.org helps people find out who gets what, and why. Farmsubsidy.org was founded by EU Transparency, a non-profit organisation in the UK and the Danish International Centre for Analytical Reporting. Using citizens rights to access government information we try to obtain detailed information to payments and recipients of farm subsidies in every EU member state. We make this data available in a way that is useful to European citizens. The project has brought together journalists, analysts and campaigners in more than ten countries. You can read a [short newspaper article](#) about the history of the project and its big successes.

Since November 2011, the project has been run by the European Fund for Investigative Journalism, a project of the Pascal Decroos Fond, a foundation based in Belgium.

## Watch the film

'Fields of Gold' is an 18-minute film that tells the story of the farmsubsidy.org project made in 2009. A shorter version is on the way.

### Latest news

[New privacy rules keep 92% of Common Agricultural Policy beneficiaries secret](#)

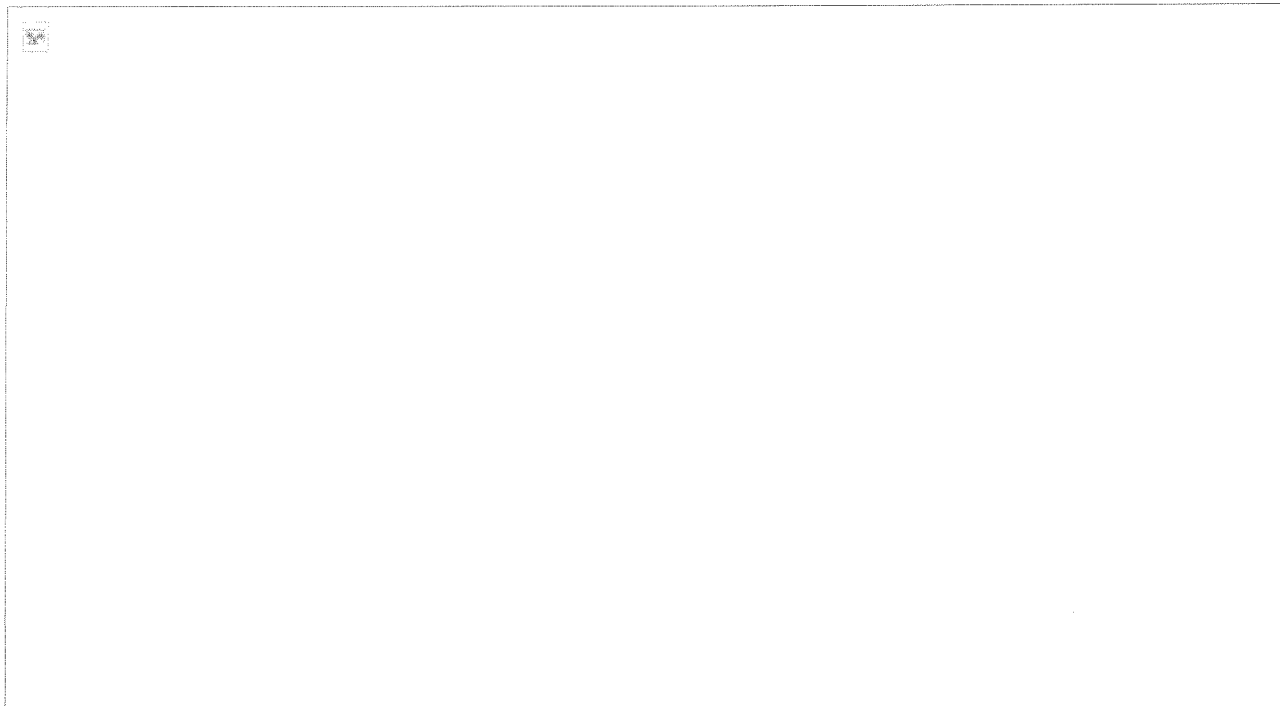
Farmsubsidy.org estimates that fewer than one in ten beneficiaries of EU farm subsidies has been published this year. The total value of payments published is ...

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New funding secures farmsubsidy.org's future as a data journalism project for the next two years.

### [Let The Sunshine In](#)

We're calling for new rules to increase transparency in farm subsidies. Will you add your voice to our campaign?



Fields of Gold: Lifting the Veil on Europe's Farm Subsidies from [farmsubsidy.org](http://farmsubsidy.org) on [Vimeo](#).

## Keep up to date

There are several ways you can stay up to date with the work of the farmsubsidy.org network. You can subscribe to regular email updates. If you want more regular updates, subscribe to our [RSS feed](#) by using a feed reader.

## Supporters

EU Transparency and DICAR (Danish International Center for Analytical Reporting), which founded farmsubsidy.org, have received funding for their farm subsidy transparency work from the following sources: William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (\$516,000 over three years), the Open Society Foundation (€22,800) and the European Social Fund (€60,000). In addition, the various organisations and individuals involved in the project have their own sources of funding.



## Co-founders

### Nils Mulvad



Born 1955, Nils is a co-founder of farmsubsidy.org and a partner of Kaas and Mulvad, a data consultancy in Denmark. Until December 2006 he was the executive director of the Danish International Center for Analytical Reporting, DICAR. Along with Kjeld Hansen he applied for and obtained the Danish data on beneficiaries of agricultural subsidies, a case that lasted for 16 months ending in May 2004 with the release of the data. Nils is a trainer in investigative journalism, computer-assisted reporting and interview techniques. Nils Mulvad has conducted training in Denmark, UK, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Serbia, Bosnia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Bangladesh. He participates in research on electronic access in Denmark and is co-author to several reports on that issue. Together with Flemming Svith he is author of two Danish textbooks on Computer-Assisted Reporting, "The New House of the Watchdog" published in 1998 and "Watchdog in the Knowledge Society" published in 2002. Nils Mulvad and Brant Houston, executive director of the US-based Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) were responsible for the two first Global Investigative Journalism Conferences in 2001 and 2003 in Copenhagen. In 2002 Nils initiated the Scoop-project to support investigative journalism in South East Europe and the Ukraine and currently is on its board. Since 2001 he has served as a board-member of the Danish Association for Investigative Journalism. He previously worked at the Danish daily Jyllands-

Posten. He operates from Aarhus in Denmark. Nils won the European Voice 'Journalist of the Year' award in December 2006.

## Jack Thurston



Based in London, UK, Jack is a co-founder of farmsubsidy.org. He led the campaign for access to farm subsidy data in the UK, first making the case for transparency in farm subsidies in 2002. Since 2005 he has been working on taking the campaign to a pan-European level. He was a Transatlantic Fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the US from 2005 to 2010. He served a special adviser to Nick Brown, the UK Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Food (1999-2001) and was a Senior Research Associate at the Foreign Policy Centre in London from 2002 to 2005. He writes widely on agriculture, food and trade policy including 'How to Reform the CAP' (FPC, 2002), and 'Free and Fair: Making the Progressive Case for Removing Trade Barriers (FPC, 2004) and [Why Europe Deserves a Better Farm Policy](#)' (Centre for European Reform, 2005). His articles have appeared in The Wall Street Journal, The Guardian, Le Monde, The Daily Telegraph, The Observer, European Voice, New Statesman, Prospect and Tribune. He blogs on agriculture policy at [capreform.eu](http://capreform.eu). He is also a regular contributor to BBC Radio Four's 'Farming Today'. Jack holds a degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Oxford University) and a masters in Public Policy Analysis (University of California at Berkeley). You can read Jack's blog here or email him via [jack\(at\)farmsubsidy\(dot\)org](mailto:jack(at)farmsubsidy(dot)org)

## Brigitte Alfter



Born in 1966 in Germany, Brigitte Alfter is the EU-correspondent in Brussels for the Danish daily Information. She has covered EU-matters for a number of years, and also writes about media law for journalist magazines in European countries. She uses freedom of information legislation as a journalistic tool and conducts training on the subject. A board member of the Danish Association for Investigative Journalism since 2002, she was one of the coordinators for the Danish Scoop project to support investigative journalism in South East Europe and the Ukraine. She was nominated for the Danish Cavling award for journalists in 2006 along with farmsubsidy.org colleague Nils Mulvad, and she was awarded the IRE Freedom of Information Award along with farmsubsidy colleagues Nils Mulvad and Jack Thurston. Since 2007 she has been editor of the 'wobsite' on freedom of information in Europe.

## Contact us

Please tell us what you think about farmsubsidy.org

Did it work?

Do you like it?

Can we make it better?

team[-at-]farmsubsidy[-dot-]org

## Media enquiries

All media enquiries to Jack Thurston,  
[jack@farmsubsidy.org](mailto:jack@farmsubsidy.org)

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€221.4 billion in payments to 21938181 recipients

e.g. [Nestle](#) or [Windsor](#)

## FAQs

### What's this all about?

The aim of farmsubsidy.org is to obtain detailed data relating to payments and recipients of farm subsidies in every EU member state and make this data available in a way that is useful to European citizens. Farmsubsidy.org is run by a network of European journalists, researchers and activists.

### Where do you get this information from?

All the data presented on this website has either been published directly by EU country governments, or obtained from them by freedom of information requests.

### I think there are mistakes in your data!

In several cases we have discovered discrepancies, inaccuracies and straightforward mistakes in the data published or released to us and wherever possible we have queried this with the relevant government agencies. Ultimately, the data available on this site is only as good as the data we have received from the governments. We do not change the data we have received from governments so if you think you have identified an error in the data you should notify the relevant government agency and, if possible, let us know too.

### Are you for or against farm subsidies?

This project is the work of a diverse group of journalists and open data activists committed to increasing the transparency of the Common Agricultural Policy. We do not share any view of how

#### Latest news

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farm subsidies should operate, other than in a transparent and open way. We hope that the release of data on the website will help European citizens to become better informed about how their money is being spent and contribute to a constructive debate about EU food and farming policy. While those involved in the project may hold their own opinions about the Common Agricultural Policy, farmsubsidy.org has no common position other than the need for greater transparency. If you want to debate the CAP, you'll find several of the members of the farmsubsidy.org network blogging at [capreform.eu](http://capreform.eu), the group blog on the future of European rural, farming and food policy.

### **Isn't this project making life even harder for European farmers?**

No, we don't think so. Many farmers have told us that they are not in the least bit ashamed of receiving public money as they believe they provide important public services. Others have told us that they think the subsidies are unfair and this should be revealed. Data relating to farm subsidy payments has been available in the United States for several years, courtesy of our friends at the [Environmental Working Group](#) and more recently the Mexican government has released farm subsidy data too.

### **What about the privacy of people listed on the website?**

Personal privacy is important but so too is fiscal transparency, anti-corruption and government accountability. We are careful to strike the correct balance. We do not believe that the information published on the site relates to any individual's personal situation, rather to his or her professional activities as a farmer or landowner.

## Who is funding the project?

The project is run by the European Fund for Investigative Journalism, a project of the Pascal Decroos Fond, a foundation based in Belgium.

Currently the project is funded from a grant by the Open Society Foundation.

EU Transparency and DICAR (Danish International Center for Analytical Reporting), which founded farmsubsidy.org, have received funding for their farm subsidy transparency work as follows:

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (a total of \$516,000 from 2006 to 2009)

The German Marshall Fund of the United States (\$165,000 in 2010)

The Open Society Foundation (€22,800 in 2006)

The European Social Fund (€60,000 from 2005 to 2006).

In addition, the various organisations and individuals involved in the project (e.g. NGOs, media and universities) have their own sources of funding.

## Why does the amount of the data differ from one country to another?

Prior to 2008, the decision to release data was taken at the level of member states (or regions), therefore it is possible that data has been released in different formats. We regularly update our [Transparency Index](#) which ranks countries according to the level of disclosure. We hope that as more and more governments release data they will do so according to a common format so that it is possible to analyse the data in a meaningful way across the European Union.

## Why is there data from some years and not others?

Prior to 2008, the decision to release data was taken at the level of member states (or regions) and many refused to release any data at all. Many countries only began publishing data in 2008. The furthest we

go back is 2000, but for most countries nowhere near all years are covered.

## **Why do some recipients appear in the data multiple times?**

Most recipients receive money every year, and some companies receive very large number of payments each year. We do our best to identify identical recipients within the data but this is very difficult without unique ID codes. Unlike the US and Mexican governments, the governments of the EU do not publish unique recipient ID codes that would allow us to track the same recipient over different years and different data sets. This means it is quite possible that the same recipient crops in the data more than once. This is one of the reasons we have provided the List tool, which allows users of the website to make lists of recipients and publish them. One application of the List tool is to group together all the payments going to a large company and all its various subsidiary companies.

## **How are the scores in the transparency index calculated?**

The scores are weighted averages based on a number of criteria including: number of years for which data has been released; amount of detail in the data, e.g. geographical location, description of subsidy schemes, date, currency etc; format of disclosure (we give extra points for disclosure of raw data in a machine-readable format and we penalise disclosure in PDF files). Countries that release comprehensive and detailed data in a machine-readable format will score highly. A country that simply follows the EU law on disclosure will score around 35%. We welcome countries that have worked with us to improve their transparency scores, for example the government of Lithuania.



## Is the website multilingual?

While the default language is English, our intention is to make the website accessible in as many languages as we can. If you would like to help out as a translator, please get in touch.

## Why doesn't my search work? Why am I experiencing problems accessing the website?

We are still ironing out technical issues, particularly as we add new functionality to the site. So please be patient but do not hesitate to get in touch if something is not working or you have suggestions for how it could work better.

## How can I get involved?

If you think you could help out with the project, please get in touch. We are particularly keen to make contact with people who want to help obtain farm subsidy data in the member states where it has not yet been released. We also welcome donations to help continue our work. And we'd love to have more users to test out new features we're developing.

## Can I have the source data on your website?

Of course you can, as long as you agree to the terms of the Open Database License. [Here's how](#).

## How can I contact you?

We want to hear your comments about farmsubsidy.org. You can comment on stories or send email to [team\(at\)farmsubsidy\(dot\)org](mailto:team@farmsubsidy.org).

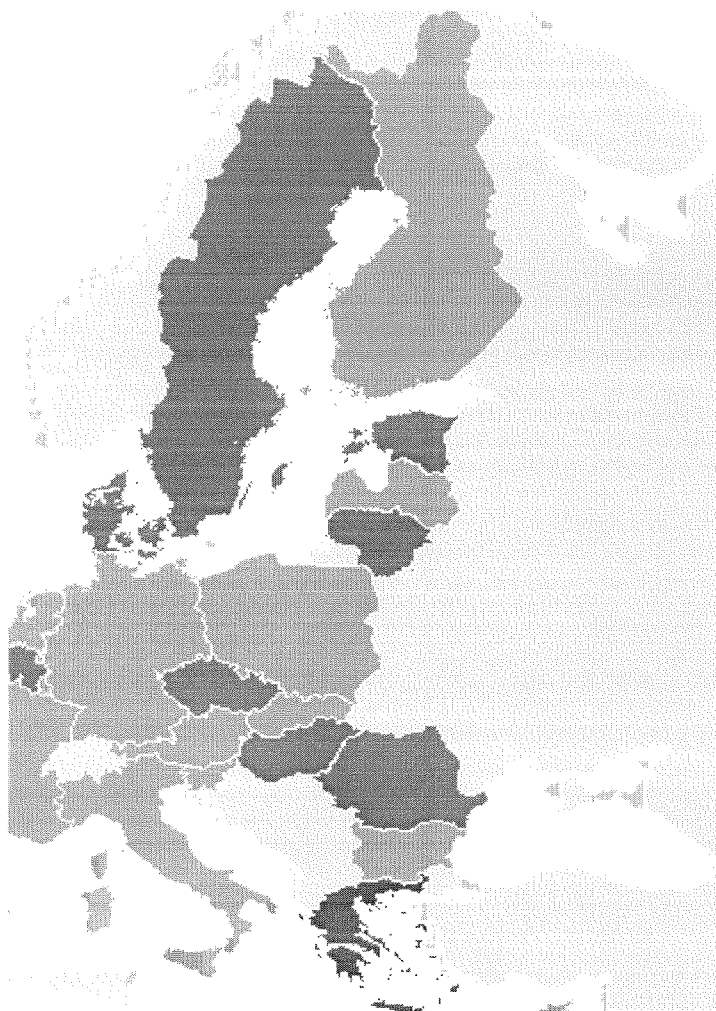
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## Transparency Index



The farmsubsidy.org Transparency Index is a way of comparing how well EU member states are doing at providing information on who gets what from the Common Agricultural Policy.

The scores are out of 100 and are weighted averages based on a number of criteria including: the number of years for which data has been released; the amount of detail in the data, e.g. geographical location, description of subsidy schemes, date,

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currency etc; the format of disclosure (we give extra points for disclosure of raw data in a machine-readable format and we penalise disclosure in PDF files). They are calculated and regularly updated by Nils Mulvad, co-founder of farmsubsidy.org.

Countries that release comprehensive and detailed data in a machine-readable format will score highly. A country that simply follows the EU law on disclosure will score around 35%. We classify countries scoring above 50% as good (shaded green on the map), countries scoring above 30% as poor (shaded amber) and less than 30% as really bad (shaded red).

We welcome countries that have worked with us to improve their transparency scores, such as the governments of Lithuania and Malta. The best way for countries to score highly is to release to us the highly detailed 'matrix' data files that they are required by law to submit to the European Commission for audit purposes. Currently only Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom have released their matrix files but we hope other countries will follow suit and thereby climb further up the Transparency Index.

You can view how the scores were calculated [here](#).

Rank	Country	Score
1st	<a href="#">Sweden</a>	92%
2nd	<a href="#">Denmark</a>	91%
3rd	<a href="#">United Kingdom</a>	89%
4th	<a href="#">Lithuania</a>	85%
5th	<a href="#">Czech Republic</a>	74%
5th	<a href="#">Estonia</a>	74%
7th	<a href="#">Belgium</a>	66%
8th	<a href="#">Malta</a>	62%
9th	<a href="#">Romania</a>	58%

Rank	Country	Score
10th	<u><a href="#">Hungary</a></u>	54%
11th	<u><a href="#">Bulgaria</a></u>	49%
12th	<u><a href="#">Latvia</a></u>	48%
12th	<u><a href="#">Slovenia</a></u>	48%
14th	<u><a href="#">Poland</a></u>	47%
15th	<u><a href="#">Austria</a></u>	46%
15th	<u><a href="#">Finland</a></u>	46%
17th	<u><a href="#">Spain</a></u>	44%
18th	<u><a href="#">Slovakia</a></u>	43%
19th	<u><a href="#">Germany</a></u>	42%
19th	<u><a href="#">Ireland</a></u>	42%
21st	<u><a href="#">Cyprus</a></u>	39%
21st	<u><a href="#">France</a></u>	39%
23rd	<u><a href="#">Italy</a></u>	35%
23rd	<u><a href="#">Netherlands</a></u>	35%
23rd	<u><a href="#">Portugal</a></u>	35%
26th	<u><a href="#">Luxembourg</a></u>	32%
27th	<u><a href="#">Greece</a></u>	25%

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