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Answer given by Mr Hansen
on behalf of the European Commission
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A decades-long farm consolidation is part of a deeper trend observed in major market-based economies, including the EU, driven by a combination of factors, such as economies of scale, technological advancements, access to capital, as well as demographic trends. The Guardian article grossly overestimates the amounts received by the largest Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) recipients. The Eurostat Farm Structure Survey shows that the average physical farm size of Portuguese farms increased from 12.6 ha in 2007 to 13.7 ha in 2020 (+8.2%), while the EU-27 average farm size increased from 11.6 ha to 17.1 ha over the same period (+47.5%).

Regarding distribution of direct payments in Portugal, in 2022, the 20% largest beneficiaries (by the amount of payment) received 80% of direct payments. However, these 20% largest beneficiaries were farming 87% of the land. Yet in 2015, the 20% largest beneficiaries received 84% of direct payments and farmed 86% of land. Thus, the concentration of direct payments slightly decreased between 2015 and 2022, despite the fact that the concentration of land has increased. This shows the first results of the current redistribution mechanisms, including a redistributive payment (CRISS) and an increase of the payment under the Small Farmers Scheme (SFS). Under the current CAP, Portugal allocated a total of EUR 348.6 million to CRISS. A total of EUR 319.5 million was allocated to SFS.

Lastly, the Commission recently proposed to strengthen the position of farmers in the food supply chain, both via the Common Market Organisation and the new Unfair Trading Practices cross border enforcement regulations. The CAP post-2027 will further consider how to better target the distribution of the CAP funds.