



**Independent network
on European Agricultural
and Rural development policies**

- PRESS RELEASE -

Commission's proposals for new CAP need drastic improvement

On January 26 Groupe de Bruges's president, Arie van den Brand, presented the Groupe de Bruges' critical analysis of the Commission's proposals for the CAP 2014-2020 as well as a series of concrete recommendations to improve the CAP to Commissioner Ciolos. Mr. van den Brand made a strong plea to take 'ecological modernisation', based on the 3 P's (People, Planet, Profit) as the new paradigm to massively improve performance in agriculture and food production in the coming period.

Beyond the current political, financial and economic crisis, the world is increasingly being confronted with the effects of a growing world population, diet changes, urbanisation, price volatility, climate change, environmental degradation and subsequently the endangerment of global food security. As it becomes more and more clear that drastic measures are needed, it is in this context disappointing that the Commission's proposals both lack this sense of urgency as well as a need for a long term strategic approach.

The CAP proposals certainly contain a number of seriously new elements and policy innovations that could remedy some of the problems of the current policy. Nonetheless the urgency concerning the nature and impact of current and future challenges, the need for an integrated global food supply chain and territorial eco-systems' approach in a rapidly changing European and international context call for a far more radical and future oriented policy.

In this respect the Commission's proposals offer too little to simultaneously ensure the provision of and access to sufficient and healthy food for a growing world population as well as taking the big steps necessary to improve the management of scarce natural resources. The so called greening measures of the proposed direct payment system are not targeted, rigid, not tailored and offer no incentives to farmers and other land owners to continuously improve their resource management performance.

The Groupe de Bruges therefore strongly suggests to adopt a greening 'menu' approach, that offers both flexibility, better targeting as well as incentives to farmers to over time and step by step improve their performance in sustainable food production and delivery of public goods. Collective, territorial based, approaches should in this menu system be strongly encouraged.

Commissioner Ciolos defended the greening measures by explaining that *“the aim for Pillar 1 is to have all European farmers take some small steps and to have Pillar 2 for more targeted and tailored measures for those farmers that want to make bigger steps towards further greening”*. Mr. Ciolos underlined the need to embrace long-term sustainability will be a process, and that the greening proposals should be viewed in this context.

The Groupe de Bruges in principle welcomes the proposed changes in the Rural Development Regulation. The measures are much better tailored and targeted, based on (better) delivery and multi-annual contracts, offering a much better legitimacy and scrutiny of public spending. It is therefore clearly a missed opportunity to not increase the budget ratio for the second Pillar.

Furthermore, the proposed Partnership Contracts should allow for rural development in the broadest sense and not merely be limited to agricultural activities. Safeguards should be established to guarantee a real integration of interventions at a territorial-based level, advantaging community-led bottom-up local development, such as through the LEADER Local Action Groups.

The Groupe de Bruges fully supports the recent Resolution of the European Parliament to reduce food waste. Currently up to 30% of all food that is being produced and that is still useful for safe human consumption is being wasted somewhere along the food supply chain. Collective efforts, from producer to consumer and at all administrative levels are urgently needed to address this issue. The Commission and the Member States should come to binding agreements with all stakeholders involved to reduce these food wastes by at least 50% by the year 2020. Incentives should be integrated in all relevant policies, among them the CAP, to encourage and if necessary force stakeholders to take their responsibility

Soil fertility is the basis of sustainable farming and one of the main ‘capital inputs’ for the future of our food provision as well as for the sequestration capacity of carbon dioxide. Over the last decades soil fertility in Europe is deteriorating and even more so in other parts of the world, also as a result of increased exports of agricultural commodities to Europe. Climate change will further affect soil fertility in a negative way. We also know that improvement of soil fertility necessitates a long term approach. Urgent action is therefore needed to encourage farmers and other landowners to improve their soils. Improvement of soil fertility should therefore be one of the main items of our proposed greening menu.

The introduction of a Common Strategic Framework for agricultural research and innovation and the creation of European Innovation Partnerships is in principle an excellent proposal. However, the proposed budget is marginal compared to the budget for direct payments (only 1.1% of total CAP budget, while direct payments still absorb a massive 72%). A budget of at least 3%, parallel to the percentage that Member States are supposed to spend in general on innovation, seems reasonable, justifiable and necessary. Concerning the implementation, safeguards should be established to ensure that all partnerships are multi-actor involving also practitioners and that all categories of farmers have full access to these partnerships and to the results of research that is being carried out in this context.

On reception of the paper, Commissioner Ciolos said: "I welcome this position from the Bruges Group which shows the important contribution think tanks brings into the debate on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy. Discussing the CAP reform, it is very important to keep this debate alive in order to strengthen the partnership between European citizen and their farmers."

The full version of the Groupe de Bruges' comments on the CAP proposals can be downloaded from our website: www.groupedebruges.eu.

Note for editors:

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