

## **Speech Hannes Lorenzen, Agricultural and Rural Convention (ARC)**

This week (April 14), the Commissioner for Agriculture, Dacian Ciolos, did a presentation for COMAGRI, the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Parliament. He indicated that he wants a broad debate on the CAP, involving civil society as much as possible, starting with discussing the objectives of the CAP.

The problem however is that the consultation period is extremely short and will be closed in mid July. The Commissioner wants to have the outlines of the CAP on track before the conclusion of the budget review.

For the public consultation a website has been opened by the commission ([http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/debate/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/debate/index_en.htm)) where everybody can post their opinion until June 3<sup>rd</sup>. But this is a one way process where the Commission has predefined five questions, to which you can express your opinion. It's not a debate between stakeholders. Go have a look and you will see hundreds of reactions. Suppose we have a couple of thousand reactions at the end, what will this mean? What will the Commissioner do with the wide variety of reactions?

For that reason two independent NGO's, Forum Synergies and the Groupe de Bruges, have taken the initiative to create the Agricultural and Rural Convention, to facilitate the debate between stakeholders. This debate should result in a common message, a common voice towards the European institutions that goes beyond the single positions that some stakeholders have already written. Stakeholders should also be encouraged to get ownership of policy. Let me explain this with an example: during the pre-accession period the PREPARE network, an NGO helping stakeholders to prepare for accession, supported the rural movement of Estonia, called Kodukant to become active and knowledgeable in the political process. This has been successful to the extent that now Kodukant is responsible for the execution of the Estonian Rural Development Programme.

To get this interactive process off the ground more time is needed than until July. Luckily we already have some other organisations on board and we have financial support from the French Fondation pour le Progrès de l'Homme. It will be organised as a combination of top down and bottom up process. The aim is to have a common communication ready for the Commission, the European Parliament and the other European institutions.

A website will be created and ready at the end of this month that will act as a main platform for debate and interaction, but also local meetings will have to be held. On the website ideas can be posted and regional and thematic work groups created. Each group will have as an end result a one page document with proposals. In the autumn we will organise a concluding conference where a complete document will be discussed UN style.