



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Directorate D. Sustainability and income support
The Director

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MINUTES

Meeting of the

CDG ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Meeting via videoconference
08 April 2022

Chair: Pierre BASCOU

Delegations present: All invited organizations were present, except Animalhealth Europe, CAN Europe, ECPA, EuroCommerce, EUROCOOP, EuropaBio, EOCC, SACAR, and WWF EPO. The invited observer was present.

1. Approval of the agenda

The agenda was drawn up by COM and shared with the group before the meeting. The group approved the agenda according to the Rules of Procedure of Civil Dialogue Groups at the beginning of the meeting.

2. Nature of the meeting

Non-public. Two persons attended without authorisation, they were not registered prior to the meeting.

3. List of points discussed

Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems:

Presentation (slides) shown were shared with participants after the meeting.

Price rise for food already started last year which lead to a major interpellation by the EP on input and commodity prices. The Russian aggression against Ukraine aggravated the situation. The 23 March food security communication addresses global food security, Ukraine food security and EU food affordability issues. Fuel/gas price impact on

fertilizer prices, the impact on wheat, maize and sunflowers production is still unknown. The increased import bill in food deficit countries raises concerns, leads to an increase in humanitarian needs and costs for humanitarian assistance. Food system crisis may have further knock-on effects in vulnerable countries. The situation requires actions in financing and macro-economic support, global monitoring of food prices and food insecurity. Need to support transformation towards resilient food systems to ensure long-term food security.

Actions for Ukrainian food security: Humanitarian aid, emergency support and macro-economic support.

In the EU food affordability and farm income need to be addressed. Support to be channelled towards most affected farmers. As short-term measures derogations to the greening obligations. Investments that reduce dependency on gas and fuel and inputs are crucial. Mid- to long-term focus on food system resilience, improving sustainability as per Farm-to-Fork and biodiversity strategy remains key. Further elements: Innovation, safeguard soil fertility, reducing dependence on feed imports, review of protein policy, accelerate renewable energy.

Derogation on 'set aside' obligations: Agricultural production and/or use of plant protection products is in principle allowed for Ecological Focus Area (EFA) obligations. Furthermore, the set aside land is considered to be a 'distinct crop' for crop diversification obligation. Application and selection of the conditions is responsibility of Member States. 7.3 million ha is productive EFA types, almost 2 million ha non-productive EFA out of which more than 1.7 million ha have been declared as land lying fallow.

Discussion:

EEB sees the derogations critical and asks whether the environmental impact has been assessed. Use of crops for animal feed for 'excessive' animal production is tantamount to food wastage. Prioritise the 'good use' of cereals.

COPA welcomed the focus on food security. Calls upon the Commission to propose exceptional measures, also to ensure liquidity to farmers. Use available CAP funds and find more funds from outside the CAP and allow for flexibility of cross-compliance rules for feed production.

The Commission: Use of agricultural biomass for energy is important, F2F is marking the start of food system transformation including healthier diets and better animal welfare. Consumption patterns change slowly. There is no sense in abandoning animal production. The Commission is looking into further possibilities to help producers (fertilizer). As regards the environmental impact of the greening derogation it is clearly an exceptional flexibility this year. Medium to long-term the need to further enhance sustainability and biodiversity remains primordial. An evaluation of the derogation will be shared in a report by the end of the year.

EFFAT asked whether the decision to allow pesticides on fallow land has been thought through and whether it is known what is safe to use? Furthermore, is there any aid for agricultural workers?

PAN Europe: Natural resources and biodiversity should not be endangered. We'll end up with more problems. Animal farming over-uses natural resources, reduce dependence on feed. Move to agroecological systems.

EURAF: Agroecology is superior to conventional agriculture, see IPCC summary for policy makers. Science is settled. Farmers need help for transition, mainly for labour input. There are sustainability issues with livestock production and biofuels. Derogations on low productive land will do little in times of high import prices.

The Commission reminded that the use of pesticides is often needed for crop production, leave flexibility for farmers. The Commission also referred to its ongoing work on sustainable use of pesticides. As regards support to farm workers the Commission refers to the social conditionality in the new CAP (labour rights). Agroecology is prominent in the food safety communication, further work is ongoing.

EURAF asserted that bringing EFAs back to the conventional way of producing is a bad idea. As regards consumer preferences (consumption of livestock products) the CAP has actually tools to change them. The very notion of 'non-productive' areas is questionable in view of the ecosystem services delivered. Reminded that the SUD is delayed for the same reason, i.e. a push-back on more sustainable agriculture.

COPA reminded that plant nutrients are key inputs – how will the Commission ensure N supply? Also water protection and soil health are important for nutrient use efficiency.

The Commission underlined the need for a robust policy orientation in the current situation with war, high food and energy prices. The Commission will not deviate from the long-term path, rather reinforce, given the importance to reduce dependency. Reminded that F2F includes actions regarding moving to more sustainable consumer patterns, but the CAP cannot cater for all needs. Sure, the CAP has tools to assist in the needed societal transformation but the challenge goes beyond. The need to improve efficiency of nutrient use is fully acknowledged and part of the Commission's work program. Overall, support to innovation and transformation is key. But, on the other hand, there are right now short-term/emergency needs which justify exceptional measures.

Environmental and climate aspects of the CSPs (AGRI B2)

Presentation (slides) shown were shared with participants after the meeting.

An overview of the first batch (19) of CSPs received to date was presented. Focus is on SO 4 to 6, contribution to overall environmental and climate targets, Green Deal targets. Collaborative effort of Commission. Member States need to be specific on targets, to explain and demonstrate environmental and climate ambition. Consistency with other legislation needs to be shown.

Green ring-fencing: Eco-Schemes 25%, only 3 go beyond. EAFRD ring-fencing quite promising, almost all beyond 35%, 60% AECC, 20% Areas facing natural constraints, 2% Natura 2000 and WFD, 18% green investments. The design of Eco-Schemes exhibit a big variety in terms of areas of action. On conditionality/GAEC: some interventions do not go beyond conditionality. GAEC 2 new for climate – why do many Member States not start in 2023? GAEC 4 buffer strips some go beyond the 3m minimum. GAEC 7

rotation/diversification – rotation is a new requirement for this period. GAEC 8 – many Member States only minimum, but also some top-ups.

Summary: Some sections need to be completed to allow a full assessment. Certain needs are underserved, ring-fencing - notably for RD – looks overall in line, coverage of environmental issues ok. The conditionality layer often needs to be reinforced and targets are often too low or missing altogether.

Q & A

ELO: Observation Letters (OL) are disappointing, both in formal terms and content-wise, arbitrary by the Commission. Fairer and greener CAP is needed, but it is not clear what the Commission wants. Agroforestry is part of the solution, but not mentioned.

BeeLife: How has the Commission evaluated the ecoschemes in terms of efficiency? Common denominator? Stakeholder workshop to peer-review?

COPA is worried about the timeline, farms plan in Summer 2022 for 2023 – speed up the process.

The Commission refers to the publishing rules. Recalls the general objectives, the Commission doesn't impose any priority. Agro-forestry: Agree with benefits but other interventions can also deliver. Up to Member States to choose depending on their specific context. No comments would be given in the meeting on particular assessment (e.g. BE vs IT). Peer review: Partnership principle is being ensured by Member States. Timing: Ball is now with Member States. The Commission is doing its best to speed up process to have a maximum clarity on the content of the plans before summer. There are some delays in some Member States. Quality of plan is also important.

IFOAM: Assessment of proportionality is important. Avoid double funding. Organic farmers do not have access to some interventions. Issue of competitiveness. Timing – clarify?

EEB: Comments are important for environmental NGO – why delay publication of OL – access is important.

EURAF: Again on agro-forestry, the Commission could insist on appropriate indicators regarding afforestation, reforestation, agroforestry. It seems that proper definitions are lacking for GAEC 8 – Member States not clear on tree elements/definition of tree component.

The Commission: Payment mechanism in 2nd pillar, calculation method needs to be explained. Can be different between Member States. Payment levels have to take into account the targets in terms of uptake. Compensation eco-schemes, but also incentive approach. No double funding allowed – not on the same land for the same practice. As regards agro-forestry, RI 17 is a relevant result indicator when agroforestry system are established. On GAEC 8, it is Member States that design landscape features and definitions (based on the previous experience in greening scheme).

Regarding the timing: 3 months remain. Timeline depends on quality of Member States reactions. The approval process is entering the discussion phase, so far overall constructive. Publication of Observation Letters: the Commission is in favour of a transparent process, will be published after comments from Member States end of April

(some Member States already published themselves). We don't sacrifice the quality but timeliness is clearly important.

EEB: How to quantify green expenditure?

The Commission: question relevant for green investments, they are programmed as such, and then assessed in their actual delivery, monitored with dedicated RI. Aid intensity according to contribution.

Carbon farming certification (AGRI B2)

Presentation (slides) shown were shared with participants after the meeting.

Carbon removals are important for carbon-neutrality to balance residual emissions. Business opportunity for the farming sector. In 2019 LULUCF net removals were 249 Mt, by 2050 200 Mt additional net removal may come from carbon farming. Communication in December 2021. Benefits and barriers to carbon farming initiatives were presented. The new CAP is an important tool for upscaling carbon farming through public funding opportunities.

In the current stage of the legislative process ('call for evidence'), stakeholders are invited to give input. Council conclusions are already adopted.

Q & A:

IFOAM: Carbon certification needs a thorough framework – no greenwashing. Adopt multi-dimensional approach, include biodiversity. Role of inputs to be taken into account. It is crucial to define additionality the right way otherwise organic farms may not benefit. Carbon markets: there are hopes to attract private funds, but also increased costs (MRV). Overall, public funding is more reliable.

The Commission thanks EURAF for a useful hint for modelling and clarifies that the mitigation potential presented is for overall EU. The Commission agrees on the desirability of a multi-dimensional comprehensive approach, but reminds that the approach needs to remain feasible and robust. Biodiversity is complex to take into account. To avoid green-washing it is important to set clear principles and robust methodologies, to ensure quality. As regards the additionality requirement the Commission reminds that protection of carbon is also important, not only increase. The CAP may indeed be more important for protection of carbon stocks. Both private and public funding will play their role, we need to explore synergies.

Agri-Plastics (AGRI B2)

Presentation (slides) shown were shared with participants after the meeting.

The Commission outlines the role of the circular economy and plastic strategy. Plastics are polluting the environment. Better use, more collection, and recycling is needed. Problem of soilage for re-use and recycling. Reliable statistics on agri-plastics are scarce.

(No Q&A)

New criteria and guidance on protected areas (DG ENV D3)

Presentation (slides) shown were shared with participants after the meeting.

The Biodiversity Strategy aims to put biodiversity on the path to recovery. Protected areas targets: larger and coherent EU-wide network 30%, thereof 10% strict protection: clear definition, management, monitoring. Commission Guidance from Jan 22: 30% target shall include N2000, existing protected areas under national schemes, new protected areas – plus ecological corridors for connection. Strictly protected areas need to be legally protected. Natural processes are left essentially undisturbed, there are non-intervention areas and areas for which active management is required (example: grasslands). 2 headline targets: More areas and status improvement.

ELO: Involvement of land owners is important to avoid problems as happened with N2000.

The Commission: stakeholder involvement is organised by Member States, the Commission insisted to involve stakeholders in the designation of areas.

Updates on the forthcoming Nature Restoration Law, on the revision of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive, and on the revision of the Industrial Emissions Directive Updates (AGRI B2)

Info points, no discussion. Please refer to the slides shown which were shared with participants after the meeting.

AOB

n. a.

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

n. a.

5. Next steps

n. a.

6. Next meeting

19 October 2022

7. List of participants

See below

(e-signed)

Pierre BASCOU

List of participants– Minutes
Meeting of the Civil Dialogue Group “Environment and Climate Change”
08/04/2022

ORGANISATIONS
BeeLife European Beekeeping Coordination
BirdLife Europe and Central Asia
CEJA
CELCAA
CEMA
CEPM
Copa
Cogeca
EBB - European Biodiesel Board
EFFAT
EFNCP
ELO
EURAF
Eurogroup for Animals
European Coordination Via Campesina
European Environmental Bureau
FEFANA - EU Association of Specialty Feed Ingredients and their Mixtures
Fertilizers Europe
FoodDrink Europe
IBMA – International Biocontrol Manufacturers Association (<i>observer</i>)

IFOAM Organics Europe
PAN Europe
SlowFood