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## MINUTES

### *Meeting of the Civil Dialogue Group on Environment and Climate change and on Cap Strategic Plans and Horizontal Matters*

**14 March 2024**

Chair: AGRI A.1, AGRI B.2

Following organisations were represented: AEEU, AnimalhealthEurope, AREFLH, AREPO, Bee Life, BirdLife Europe, CEETAAR, CEFIC, CEJA, CELCAA, CEPF, CEPM, COGECA, COPA, EAPF, ECVC, EEB, EFA, EFFAT, EFOR, ELARD, ELO, EMB, ERCA, EURAF, EUROMONTANA, EUSTAFOR, FEFAC, FEFANA, FERTILIZERS EUROPE, FESASS, FoodDrinkEurope, GEOPA-COPA, IBMA, IFOAM, IPIFF, ORIGINEU, PFP<sub>2</sub>, RURAL TOUR, RED, SLOW FOOD, WWF

### **1. Approval of the agenda and of the minutes of previous meeting**

The chairperson welcomed the members of the Civil Dialogue Group (CDG) to the first joint meeting of the CDG on Environment and Climate Change and on CAP Strategic Plans and Horizontal Matters. The minutes of the previous meetings are approved without any comments. The chairperson presented the agenda of the meeting which is approved by the group. No AOB is raised.

### **2. Nature of the meeting**

Non-public.

### **3. List of points discussed**

#### **Point 2. Sustainable farming and the Common Agricultural Policy – learning from the present and looking in the future**

##### **a. General introduction**

The Commission's representative (DG AGRI A.1) gave a short overview on the overall context and the key milestones and refers to the strategic Dialogue which was initiated by

the President of the Commission in January this year (slides shown are shared on CIRCABC).

## **b. The Green Architecture of the CAP – voluntary support instruments - Introduction and exchange of views**

After an introduction by the Commission representatives (DG AGRI A.1 and B.2) to the topic and the current green architecture (slides shown are shared on CIRCABC), the exchange of views was structured along the following questions:

*Taking into account the experiences of the first year of implementation and with a view for the future development of voluntary environmental and climate support tools for farmers (namely, eco-schemes, agri-environment-climate commitments, forest-environment-climate commitments, Natura 2000/WFD payments, green productive and non-productive investments),*

- *what works well?*
- *how can these tools be improved to address the needs and bottlenecks?*
- *What can be strengthened to help implementation?*
- *how can the role of advisory services be strengthened to help farmers in the implementation?*

Participants shared constructive ideas and experiences. Several alluded to farmer protests highlighting various reasons behind the protests: need for more support and time in the transition, need to address pricing in the food supply chain and imports (lack of competitiveness), need to reduce administrative burden.

Referring to recent discussions on simplification of the CAP, some organisations (ECVC, Agroecology, IFOAM, Birdlife) stressed that there was no request to weaken the environmental ambition and requirements of the policy. They took the view that the environmental ambitions have been poorly discussed, communicated and designed (complex and rigid) and highlighted the need for more effective advisory services for farmers. CEJA called for addressing implementation gaps in the CAP and recommended a menu approach to cover all farming systems including livestock. COPA insisted on the need to estimate the overall cost for environmental effort per ha EU-wide and to calculate the costs of the green architecture at farm level (especially in view of inflation and changed market situation). The need to increase the level of payments was supported also by Birdlife and CEJA. Many participants said communication to and advice for farmers at the start of implementation has been challenging or insufficient, which led to difficulties and resistance. Some participants also mentioned the need to better reflect the socio-economic impact of the changes (COPA, FESASS). COGECA highlighted the positive contribution of cooperatives in the implementation.

There was convergence of views on the need to retain flexibility within the green architecture, to ensure more complementarity, focus on a whole farm and systemic approach (“package approach”) as opposed to support individual practices and requirements (COPA, IFOAM, ECVC, BEELILFE, IBMA). There was a call to ensure that advice and coaching would help ensure understanding the purpose and benefit of the environmental requirements. For this purpose, AGROECOLOGY underlined the need for trained advisors and setting up a lighthouse farm network (for dissemination of good practices). It also said that farmers want a fair income, less administrative burden and fair-trade agreements. The need to support small farmers and rural workers was stressed (ECVC, Rural Tour). Rural Tour also highlighted the benefits of agro-tourism for these farms.

IFOAM expressed specific concerns about organic farming support, the competition between Eco-schemes and AECC and the fact that organic farmers do not have full access of Eco-scheme and AECM. It also proposed that the organic certification should be enough to receive the support.

EURAF complimented the huge effort of Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies to implement the new CAP and pointed out the need to share innovative practices and measures and more data collection and sharing.

COPA raised the issue of complexity for small farmers as far as the implementation of some GAEC is concerned. FEFANA pointed out the need to encourage the uptake of certain scientifically proven schemes (e.g. feeding practices) and that this should not be left to the Member States to decide.

Finally, it was mentioned that a constructive and positive vision is needed based on analytical work (EEB) and that farmer ownership of designing and applying solutions should be a leading principle.

### **c. Towards a sustainable transition in livestock farming – challenges and solutions - Introduction and exchange of views**

Based on a comprehensive introduction from DG AGRI, members of the CDG recognised that there is no “one fits all solution” for challenges related to livestock and that the issues are diverse in different sub sectors and production systems. Different livestock farming techniques imply different means of production and implications for environment and climate and policies should make a clear distinction between these (ECVC, IFOAM). Global challenges and solutions are not necessarily the same ones that fit each territorial level (AHEU). Via Campesina called for re-territorialisation of farming and support in case animal feed comes from nearby territories and is integrated in the wider farming system respecting local carrying capacity. Circularity of feed and manure is the key for sustainability (FEFAC, COGECA). Huge decrease of mixed crop-livestock and small-scale farming should raise concern (ECVC, RED, COPA-IE). Intensive livestock production fuelled by fossil energy and unsustainable as well as further concentration of livestock should be avoided (Agroecology, ECVC).

Ruminants deserve a more positive narrative: grass-based systems are more sustainable and resilient than others, and hold specific relevance to certain territories, including in terms of employment. Despite being proclaimed as beneficial, beef and small ruminants are often disadvantaged; the collapse of such ruminant production systems should be avoided as it is a contradiction to strive to preserve grasslands without livestock (Euromontana). Accordingly, sustainable livestock production and animals should be ensured in every part of the EU territory, while concentration at a farm /territory level should be avoided (Agroecology, FESASS, IFOAM). The same applies for interactions between livestock and forest and the advantages of sylvo-pastoral systems for climate mitigation and adaptation. Traditionally, most national legislations have prohibited animals grazing in forest areas, especially in southern Europe. This is now changing, and animal grazing is used to control biomass and prevent fire hazards. Moreover, there is evidence that, by including tree leaves in their diet, GHG emissions are reduced. Legislation should be revised accordingly (EURAF; Agroecology).

On the policy process: System change should be gradual and focus, where necessary, on reducing pressure on environment and not on introducing bans (COPA). Recent policy pressure on livestock comes from EU policies on emissions (industrial emissions directive), animal welfare and deforestation (COPA). Farming is an economic activity,

not a public service. On sustainability, the discussion should start from its socio-economic aspects: income viability and generational renewal as pressing dynamics (COPA). Farmers must be in the driving seat of whatever policy reform that concerns them; they need to be empowered to be able to take steps towards the transition and should not be forced by policy into a different production system (COPA). Need for more integrated and participatory strategies; European Innovation Partnership is a good example (RED). More subsidiarity should translate into more flexibility (COPA).

On trade aspects: imports with different sustainability requirements compared to those imposed on EU producers remains a key issue for several organisations. Whatever is consumed in Europe should be issued from same rules and norms; otherwise, problems of leakage as well as policy coherence (Euromontana, COGECA). Trade-related discussions should also consider animal feed imports and dumping of EU products on third country markets (ECVC). Many stressed the need for the EU to better regulate agricultural market and food supply chains, so as to enhance price transparency and value chain governance (IFOAM), also through better organizing livestock farmers (COGESA). Public procurement could play a role in supporting sustainable farming.

### **Point 3. Adjustments to respond to current crises and proposals for simplification**

The afternoon session provided for a presentation of ongoing Commission work on simplification, where the non-paper on REDUCING THE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR FARMERS: NEXT STEPS was presented. Further, AGRI/B2 presented a) the Partial derogation from GAEC 8 in 2024, b) the amendments to the delegated act for GAEC 1, maintenance of a ratio of permanent grassland in relation to agricultural area and c) the outline of the proposal to change the CAP regulation to be adopted the following day. Finally, the Commission requested the aid of the participants for the dissemination of a Commission survey among farmers on administrative burden and informed the participants about the 2<sup>nd</sup> study by DG ENV on the evaluation of the Nitrate Directive. For the exchange of view, the Commission introduced the following two questions:

- *Where do you see the main sources of concern and complexity for farmers when it comes to environmental and climate objectives and obligations? (within or outside the CAP);*
- *What are your suggestions for the longer term to simplify the implementation of the policy on the ground?*

Following DG AGRI's presentation, COPA, COGECA, and GEOPA representatives generally welcomed the simplification measures and actions and in particular the GAEC changes. On force majeure, they asked for this to be applied at regional level and for a time perspective of more than a year. GEOPA asked that the CSPs are amended twice per year and to clarify which measures apply in 2024 and which ones are for 2025. Questions were raised about the timeframe of the application of derogations and basic act amendments to GAECs and on the risk of double controls on bigger farms, since smaller farms are exempted. COPA was positive on the Commission initiative to launch the survey to farmers and welcomed the powers given to them. CEJA welcomed the initiatives and highlighted that young farmers are committed to the green transition, appreciated addressing implementation gaps and greater flexibility, expressed its concerns on the re-opening of the basic act, called for a consistency check on all legislations affecting farming and asked for a dialogue on the remuneration for farming. ECVC and IFOAM were critical saying that the rationale of the proposals does not fit the

response and that the draft proposals weaken the environmental ambition of the CAP. ECVC reminded that the main priority is to reinforce the farmers' position in the food chain and to adapt the CMO to ensure fair prices. IFOAM noted that organic farmers also have administrative burden and that beneficial practices are an integral part of their farming; they had hoped that "Green by definition" for organic farmers for a number of GAEC would be included in the Proposal and said that the abolition of the first requirement of GAEC 8 will not help biodiversity, stressing that farmers demonstrated for better prices and not for simplification. Birdlife questioned the weakening of GAECs vis-à-vis the environmental ambition of the CSP, the lack of Impact Assessment and the nature of the CAP if derogations are granted. ECVC was critical about the survey saying that it constitutes an additional administrative burden, difficult to be filled in by farmers. They considered the Commission should better discuss concerns with their organisation than collecting views of individual farmers through this survey. Birdlife recalled the significant role of the GAECs and considered that the draft proposals would significantly weaken standards. They asked the Commission to explain the changes and questioned the lack of impact assessment and consultation with stakeholders. PAN Europe was also critical about lowering environmental conditions. Euromontana welcomed the EC proposal on GAEC 1 but invited the EC to consider again the permanent grassland definition in order to better consider as temporary grassland also land under grass for more than 5 years. CEPF asked about the expected strategic dialogue on forestry announced by VP Sefcovic, highlighted regulatory restrictions on forestry and the lack of compensation/funding and inconsistency of different policies. FooddrinkEurope, said they were awaiting the food-supply chain measures, and noted that the CAP could be a way to address these issues. They considered that the Strategic Dialogue would cover the issue too. Rural Tour said that farmers do not like constant changes and that training is needed with the members of the unions/cooperatives and not only with the administration. Several participants mentioned the role of advice and peer-to-peer learning of farmers.

#### **Point 4. EU Climate target 2040**

##### **a. Presentation of the communication**

The meeting was completed in the afternoon by two presentations of DG CLIMA, one on the **EU climate 2040 target** and the other one on the **Communication on Climate Risk preparedness**.

The Commission's representative (*DG CLIMA A.2*) shared the information on the 2040 Climate Target Communication, as a response to the EU Climate Law's directive, aiming to establish a framework for addressing climate targets beyond 2030 while ensuring predictability for stakeholders given the long-term nature of climate-related investments. It was explained that the next College will present the legislative proposal for the 2040 climate target to refine the post-2030 policy framework. The second representative (*DG CLIMA A.2*) offered insights into the impact assessment associated with the 2040 Climate Target Communication, presenting the different target options towards climate neutrality by 2050.

COGECA underscored timely ambitious targets in the agricultural sector considering the global challenge of climate change and emphasised the need to focus on reducing global emissions, also in view of the relatively small EU contribution compared to the global

total. It also stressed the importance of producing more food with fewer emissions on a limited land area, advocating for ambitious policies to support sustainable agricultural practices. COPA raised concerns about the feasibility of achieving zero emissions in the agricultural sector by 2040, due to the limitations of current technology such as diesel-dependent tractors and questioned the rationale behind comparing scenarios with different global climate action perspectives. FDE supported the points made by COPA and COGECA, emphasising the food industry's role in transitioning towards more sustainable practices, stressed the importance of investments in the next policy framework and inquired about the next steps regarding pricing agricultural emissions. ECVC stressed prioritising emission reductions over carbon farming, urged focusing on feeding people rather than commodifying carbon and land speculation and raised concerns about the viability of carbon farming for farmers and the need for a transition to agroecological solutions. CMW asked about separating targets for temporary and permanent CO<sub>2</sub> removals to avoid false equivalences in land-based sequestration and emphasised the importance of distinguishing between temporary and permanent removals in policy formulation.

## **Point 5. State of play on ongoing legislative proposals and communications**

### **a. Information by COM**

The representative from DG-CLIMA highlighted the recent publication of the European Climate Risk Assessment (EUCRA) report, identifying 36 key risks for Europe and emphasizing the urgency in addressing climate challenges and emphasizing the interconnectedness of climate impacts across various sectors. Finally, an international conference to further discuss managing climate risks is planned.

FDE highlighted the need to address agricultural emissions pricing, which was absent in the Communication. FESASSAs expressed concerns whether these scenarios accounted for potential animal-origin diseases impacting the future. The AREFLH representative noted that Romania experienced a 38% reduction in food production last year due to flooding, exacerbated by settlements along waterways. They inquired if CLIMA considered land use in their assessment. COPA highlighted the burden of regulations particularly small-scale farmers in Eastern Europe, urging consideration for both economic and social impacts.

The chair concluded the meeting by thanking everyone and encouraging participants to complete and spread ongoing survey to gather a broader perspective from farmers on simplification process.

## **Point 6. AOB**

No AOB were raised.

## **7. Next meeting**

The next meetings are indicatively planned on 11 June 2024 for the CDG on CAP Strategic Plans and Horizontal Matters and on 21 October 2024 for the CDG on Environment and Climate Change. The possibility of an additional meeting is considered.

## **8. List of participants**

See Annex.

(e-signed)

List of participants– Minutes  
*Meeting of the Civil Dialogue Group on Environment and Climate change  
and on The Cap Strategic Plans and Horizontal Matters  
14 March 2024*

| <b><u>ORGANISATION</u></b>  |
|---|
| AEEU - AGROECOLOGY EUROPE   |
| ANIMALHEALTHEUROPE  |
| AREFLH - ASSEMBLÉE DES RÉGIONS EUROPÉENNES FRUITIÈRES LÉGUMIÈRES ET HORTICOLES                                  |
| AREPO - ASSOCIATION DES RÉGIONS EUROPÉENNES DES PRODUITS D'ORIGINE  |
| BEE LIFE - EUROPEAN BEEKEEPING ORGANISATION   |
| BIRDLIFE EUROPE   |
| CEETAR - CONFÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE DES ENTREPRENEURS DE TRAVAUX TECHNIQUES AGRICOLES                             |
| CEFIC - EUROPEAN CHEMICAL INDUSTRY COUNCIL  |
| CEJA - CONSEIL EUROPÉEN DES JEUNES AGRICULTEURS / EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF YOUNG FARMERS                             |
| CELCAA - EUROPEAN LIAISON COMMITTEE FOR THE AGRICULTURAL AND AGRI-FOOD TRADE                                    |
| CEPF - CONFEDERATION OF EUROPEAN FOREST OWNERS  |
| CEPM - EUROPEAN CONFEDERATION OF MAIZE PRODUCERS  |
| COGECA - EUROPEAN AGRI-COOPERATIVES / GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATIVES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION |
| COPA - "EUROPEAN FARMERS / COMMITTEE OF PROFESSIONAL AGRICULTURAL ORGANISATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION           |
| EAPF - EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR PLANT-BASED FOODS  |
| ECVC - EUROPEAN COORDINATION VIA CAMPESINA  |
| EEB - EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU   |
| EFA - EUROGROUP FOR ANIMALS   |
| EFFAT - EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS IN THE FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM SECTORS                        |
| EFOW - EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF ORIGIN WINES  |



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| ELARD - EUROPEAN LEADER ASSOCIATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT   |
| ELO - EUROPEAN LANDOWNER'S ORGANISATION   |
| EMB - EUROPEAN MILK BOARD   |
| ERCA - EUROPEAN RURAL COMMUNITY ALLIANCE  |
| EURAF - EUROPEAN AGROFORESTRY FEDERATION  |
| EUROMONTANA   |
| EUSTAFOR  |
| FEFAC - EUROPEAN FEED MANUFACTURERS FEDERATION / FÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE DES FABRICANTS D'ALIMENTS COMPOSÉS |
| FEFANA - EU ASSOCIATION OF SPECIALITY FEED INGREDIENTS AND THEIR MIXTURES                                 |
| FERTILIZERS EUROPE  |
| FESASS - FÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE POUR LA SANTÉ ANIMALE ET LA SÉCURITÉ SANITAIRE                             |
| FOODDRINKEUROPE   |
| GEOPA-COPA  |
| IBMA - INTERNATIONAL BIOCONTROL MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION   |
| IFOAM - INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS EUROPEAN REGIONAL GROUP                 |
| IPIFF - INTERNATIONAL PLATFORM OF INSECTS FOR FOOD AND FEED   |
| ORIGINEU - ORGANISATION POUR UN RÉSEAU INTERNATIONAL D'INDICATIONS GÉOGRAPHIQUES                          |
| PFP - PRIMARY FOOD PROCESSORS   |
| RURAL TOUR - EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF RURAL TOURISM   |
| RURALITY, ENVIRONMENT, DEVELOPMENT  |
| SLOW FOOD   |
| WWF - WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE  |
| <b><u>OBSERVERS</u></b>   |
| COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS  |
| EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE  |