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MINUTES

Meeting of the Civil Dialog Group on the CAP Strategic Plans and Horizontal Matters

14 September 2023

Chair: Catherine Geslain-Laneelle, Director, DG Agriculture and Rural development

All organisations were present except: EAPF - European Alliance for Plant-based Foods, EFNCP - European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism, EPHA - European Public Health Alliance, EUCOFEL – FruitVegetablesEurop, EUROMALT, Fertilizers Europe, FESASS - Fédération Européenne pour la Santé Animale et la Sécurité Sanitaire, IPIFF - International Platform of Insects for Food and Feed, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

The meeting was held in hybrid and non-public format.

Introduction of the Chair and approval of the agenda - The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the CDG members. The Chair's introduction touched upon President Von der Leyen's State of the Union speech where agriculture and the agri-food system featured as an important element in light of the strategic importance of food security and the importance of protecting environment and climate.

The agenda was approved with a request for more information on the work on the topics of strategic autonomy planned by the Spanish Presidency.

1. Mapping and Analysis of the of the overall ambition of the 28 CAP Strategic plans (CSP).

Representatives of the Evaluation Helpdesk presented preliminary results of the conducted study. The presentation was followed by an exchange of views in relation to the following questions:

- *What are key areas where CAP Plans contribute?*
- *What are key gaps/ key areas where improvement is needed?*

The representatives of the Evaluation Helpdesk explained that they conducted the mapping study over the course of one year. Work was concluded in July 2023. It is based on the content of the approved CAP Strategic Plans. The full report is scheduled to be published in November alongside the Commission's report to the Parliament and the

Council on the common ambition of the Plans. The study presents an accumulative EU-level (rather than Member-State-specific) mapping of the implementation choices made in the CSPs for all CAP interventions and instruments and for all specific objectives. It includes a first assessment of the joint contribution of the Strategic Plans to the ten key CAP objectives, as well as their overall consistency and contribution to the Green Deal targets from the Biodiversity and the Farm to Fork Strategies. The assessment is ex-ante based on Member States' policies prior to implementation.

They stressed that, given Member States' different needs, priorities and existing national policies, the design of the individual CSPs can differ widely. Thus, comparisons are difficult.

Some of the key points made during the presentation related to the **economic specific objectives** included:

- The starting point for developing the CSPs for the member states was to undertake a SWOT analysis which resulted then in a needs assessment.
- The approach towards identifying needs differed across Member States, with close to 1600 needs altogether. The economic needs were those set to be met to a greater extent through the plans followed by the environmental and climate needs whereas the socioeconomic needs were set to be met to a lesser extent through the design of the plans.
- Together, the 28 plans contain close to 2,500 interventions, with over 800 designed for sectoral support. Some Member States designed very few but broad interventions, while others designed many very specific interventions.
- The study looked at the financial allocation to interventions by specific objective. When added up, various shares for the specific objectives go beyond 100%. This overview allows to compare the share of the total CAP budget devoted to each specific objective but as many interventions are linked to several objectives the same euro will be counted numerous times. The impact from conditionality is not accounted for because there is no money associated with conditionality.
- The CSPs emphasise farm income support, in particular for farms with higher and special needs (e.g. in disadvantaged areas or small-size farms). The plans also emphasise the strengthening of farm competitiveness whereas farmers' role in the food chain is mostly addressed outside of the CAP.
- The obligatory basic income support applies to all farms complying with conditionality rules. In most Member States it represents between 20 and 40 percent of the overall CAP allocations, including co-financing. Between four to ten percent of Member States' CAP allocations are spent on coupled support targeting specific sectors, as well as redistributive income support.
- Some interventions in the area of rural development also focus on farm income support, in particular support for areas with natural constraints or other disadvantages.

- Redistributive, coupled, and basic income support are the key interventions in the CSPs to address economic needs, with redistributive measures being compulsory.
- The overall CAP budget has decreased compared to the previous period and in some respects more efforts are expected from farmers, notably regarding the eco-schemes.
- Direct payments are important tools to reduce income volatility. Risk management tools play an important role and are included in rural development and in sectoral interventions. About half of the Member States support risk management through rural development and most Member States through sectoral interventions, primarily through insurance and mutual funds. Farms which are targeted to activate risk management tools are about 15% of all EU farms which is more than the previous period but still it remains limited.
- Significant efforts are to be made to redistribute income to farms more in need, in particular small and medium-sized farms. CRISS is implemented by 26 Member States (exceptions are Denmark and Malta). Nearly 11% of direct payments are earmarked for this, which represents a two-point times increase compared to the previous programming period. Capping and reduction of the basic income support, mostly redirected towards CRISS, are other redistributive tools. Differentiated or targeted design of other interventions favour smaller farms through reduction of payments. Such could be the case for coupled income support, support to investments and the payment for areas with natural constraints.
- 23 CSPs provide additional income support to compensate for higher production costs due to less ideal physical conditions in mountain areas for example.
- About 400,000 farms are expected to benefit from investment support and that is an increase of about 30% relative to the previous period. About 70% of the investment support is associated to productive investments and about 20% to non-productive sustainability investments. Nine Member States have higher support for investments that are linked to smaller and medium-sized farms.
- In relation to strengthening the position of farmers in the food chain, the CSPs encourage stronger cooperation between farmers, producer groups, and producer organizations, in order to increase the bargaining power and their competitiveness. About 8% of the farms are supported to engage in producer cooperation in short supply chains and in quality schemes. All Member States also put significant additional efforts into increasing the role of organic agriculture. This also contributes to strengthening farmers' position in the food chain. Outside of the efforts in the CSPs, the Directive on unfair trading practices, or competition law in general, should also strengthen farmers' position in the food chain.

Some general comments made by members regarding the general economic objective of the CAP in the CSPs, included:

- Many appreciated the work of the mapping study and the wealth of information it contains.
- **COPA** expressed that there is a need to focus on how we deal with the biggest challenges we are facing in the short term, the midterm and the long term, the war in Ukraine and the repercussions that has had for the agricultural sector, particularly within the internal market. How scientific knowledge can be included and consulted when it comes to political decision making is important. Implementation might be different than planning. An increase of the baseline in conditionality must be considered for productivity. The Commission needs to include in their evaluation the cost of applying the conditionality standards. In addition, it needs to be evaluated in terms of added value and real impact.
- **GEOPA - COPA** expressed that there is a very complex economic context which has to be looked at from the farmers' point of view. Environmental objectives are a part of the situation to be looked at with a profitability approach which will bring dynamism in the rural areas. Administrative simplification is very important. The Commission has given a lot of freedom to the Member States, but it has also given them a lot of responsibility regarding implementation. This increases the administrative burden. More of an emphasis is needed on how implementation at the national level can reduce administrative workload by focusing more on the national level, regional and local levels, so that we can reduce the administrative burden. Legislation needs to be integrated. For federal states this is an additional complication.
- **RED** were interested in the criteria used to determine which are SME, small and medium farms and which actors are engaged in cooperation.

Key points from the presentation of the Help Desk, related to the environmental objectives included:

- The reformed CAP contributes to a higher degree of environmental and climate commitments from the agricultural sector through enhanced conditionality and requirements to ring-fence funding. Conditionality plays an important role here, and eco-schemes are the big new building block from this reform. In financial terms, it represents the biggest element, almost 45 billion euros and close to 25% of direct payments. Eco-schemes cover about 70% of utilized agricultural area in the EU. There are 158 eco-schemes designed and they are very different. Some have a very wide scope, others are more narrowly focused.
- The environment and climate commitments under rural development receive important funding of EUR 33 billion. The planned green investments and other rural developments are also very important to contributing to these objectives.
- The interventions support a number of practices, such as crop rotation and crop diversification, soil covering, limitation in use of plant protection products, and grazing management. Agro-biodiversity, wildlife, organic farming, grassland management, and landscape features are supported via the agri-environmental interventions. Among the animal welfare practices, the most common practice supported is improving housing conditions. Common practices that are beneficial for the environment and supported through investment aid are related to landscapes, water management and animal husbandry.

- 82% of the area targeted by eco-schemes is expected to have some form of climate mitigation element. But it is difficult at this stage to put figures on what this could look like in terms of actual emission reduction or carbon removal.
- There are key steps in the CSPs in terms of contributing to mitigation, in terms of management commitments. The enhanced conditionality is going to be supporting carbon stocks and resilience in soils. Other aspects will also be contributing to both carbon sequestration and to GHG emission reductions. This includes better nutrient management and increasing organic farming, which will also reduce nitrogen fertilizer use.
- Some reductions in livestock emissions are possible primarily through improvements in animal welfare and investments in productivity and manure management, with more action required to respond to needs. There is potential to have substantial GHG savings and carbon sequestration when interventions are well linked.
- Contribution to more sustainable energy production is planned mainly on farm without substantial increases of production capacity, but with the possibility to be complemented by policies and measures outside the CAP.
- CSPs will help protection of natural resources: soil health, water quality, nutrient losses. Soil management requirements, including crop rotation, have been strengthened. Particularly strict requirements of buffer strips have been introduced, which is going to have implications for both nutrient use, as well as water quality.
- The CSPs contribute to the EU Green Deal targets and with an increased ambition compared to the previous period, particularly in support of organic farming. Tools outside of the CAP complement CAP organic support and include capacity building, market development, knowledge exchange, and media campaigns.
- A third of the agricultural area is covered with some or many interventions related to preserving biodiversity. However, some schemes with a very promising design for biodiversity seem to have a low financial allocation and target area. Some Member States are bold in using a results-based approach and using the cooperation measure to add value to the support provided under the eco –schemes and the agri-environmental commitments.
- The CSPs appear to be making a valuable contribution to the target of high diversity landscape features. There is still a need in many places to bring back lost landscape features and actively restore and manage what is there. GAEC 8, being a baseline standard, does not require management or restoration explicitly. There are many uncertainties in the calculation of the baseline values, and this is something that may change.
- Natura and the Annex 1 habitats are the top priority for EU conservation and biodiversity efforts and affect many farmers and foresters, and a lot of agricultural and forestry land. Managing this is essential to maintaining biodiversity in the Natura network. The CSPs show a very wide needs-identification and a high priority setting for this. However, this is not fully reflected in the target values for the relevant result indicator. There are many interventions that can be used for

Natura, notably - of course - the Natura payment, as well as knowledge, training, and transfer. Of note is that five plans have set a very high target to cover more than 70% of the Natura 2000 agriculture and forestry area with targeted CAP support. Also promising is that there have been significant changes in the definition of eligible area, and this provides much more scope for farmers to meet eligibility requirements. Also promising is that there are some CAP plans that clearly identify nature restoration needs in their investment measure, and the use of the Natura payment intervention is also strengthened compared to the previous (rural development) plans.

Additional views and comments shared from members:

Agro - Ecology Europe shared recommendations for the CAP to focus also on farm workers, and to consider full-time equivalent workers as basis for direct payments. There should be a consideration of more labour-intensive farming systems, because agroecology is more labour as well as knowledge-intensive. The diversification of farming systems needs a larger workforce. Taking into account full-time equivalent workers or basic work on the farm for subsidies would empower young farmers and give them security and stability. There must be enough funding for the development of independent farm advisory services to support farmers in developing a systemic vision of their farm. There needs to be a dedicated budget to fund public farm advisory services for good training and efficient training. The question of land access should be considered, and that is a major issue also for the consideration of installation of new, young farmers and generational renewal in the farming sector. The creation of land banks should be discussed.

Via Campesina presented their analysis related to the fairness perspective of the policy. A presentation was shared with members (and not shown, due to time limitations). Some of the key points of Via Campesina were the following:

- fairness and food sovereignty have to be the basis of market regulations, international trade, and decentralising the food sector. The whole food system urgently needs many new actors with dedicated support;
- In relation to the redistributive payments, a closer look is needed: most Member States have defined the first hectares for the top up of this support, far beyond the average farm size.
- Most Member States did not include a ceiling in the CRISS which makes all farms profiting from that up to a certain tipping point where large farms get less direct payments in the end. Regarding the coupled income support for young farmers, in Luxembourg, France, and the Netherlands, it is paid as a fixed amount per farm and not as a top-up per hectare. That enables also small farms to have a good way to start.
- In some strategic plans, there is a very future oriented aspect where agri-structural adjustments are included in eco-schemes. For example, Romania has an eco-scheme explicitly for small farms. Wallonia additionally offers a small farmers scheme for organic market gardeners;
- Direct payments could be spent in a more targeted way;

- Improvements, for example, in the redistributive payments can be made also by downsizing the range of the first hectares or introducing a ceiling for its receipt. Minimum requirements for the implementation of such measures are missing.
- Improvements should be made through annual amendments;
- The urgently needed ecological transformation of our food system in Europe and worldwide needs to go hand in hand with a fair perspective for all existing and future actors within it.

IFOAM expressed appreciation of the fact that there is an increase of the budget for organic farming within the National Strategic Plans along with clear objectives when it comes to developing organic farming. On the other hand, the support provided per farmer is lower. The risk for double payment has prevented some organic farmers from access to other kinds of support that they could benefit from, despite all of the advantages to the environment via the organic farming model. There are organic farmers who receive less from the CAP in comparison with traditional farmers. In addition, more efforts are needed to increase the demand for organic products and informing customers of their availability. European legislation is needed when it comes to sustainable food, as well as labelling for animal-based food. The pressure cannot be only on the farmers and on the consumers. Every part of the chain needs to make an effort to make sure that the EU can actually transition towards sustainable food chains.

EURAF recalled that MS should reduce barriers to the entry to support schemes for young and small farmers.

CEJA provided further information from their analyses of the CSPs and problems related to generational renewal. They said it is complex to identify all elements relevant to young farmers across plans. Even though Member States were asked to show how the specific objective seven was aligning with those policies, there is no clear assessment to what extent this has been the case. The CEJA representative asked whether the CSPs signal that the policy and support for rural development is left to other EU policies.

EFFAT expressed misgivings that only limited financial resources are allocated to promoting employment and interventions tackling social exclusion and poverty. They acknowledged the importance of social conditionality, asking the Commission to encourage Member States to start implementing the rules earlier than the deadline of 2025. Effective implementation with effective sanctions will be needed, so that this rule has a real impact on the working conditions of agricultural workers. Promoting quality jobs and employment using the interventions and the resources within the CAP should be considered for the future. More education and training for agricultural workers, not just for farmers, is needed. Social conditionality will remain important including the quality of jobs and the level of employment. If capping is proposed for direct payments, the real labour costs need to be factored in.

ERCA asked for more disaggregated figures at national and regional level and expressed concerns on lower ambition related to rural areas. Additional efforts are needed to support staff who are implementing rules in Member States and support for supporting organisations to ensure that people who may not understand all the compliance obligations are helped in that process and not penalised.

COPA requested further information on evaluating food security with current production methods, and whether there are contradictions between objectives. There are regions in Europe where there are no alternatives to land use and where conversion to another kind of land use is impossible. This impacts also our biodiversity. More information is needed on the actual impact of investments.

WWF was also interested in potential contradictions between objectives and whether certain types of intervention are analysed as detrimental, for example for climate change and adaptation.

Birdlife confirmed that presented results on biodiversity are similar to their analysis regarding this objective. There are some improvements that have been done but the schemes that were very good and potentially delivering on climate and biodiversity have a low financial allocation and will not achieve the needed transformation. Birdlife asked the Commission for more information on eco-schemes uptake, reaffirming that biodiversity is important also for productivity.

IBM agreed with the importance of training for farmers and recalled the importance of biocontrol solutions for the agricultural transition among other solutions and practices.

GEOPA- COPA made an additional comment in relation to social conditionality referring to dissuasions and sanctions as non - constructive ways to promote sustainable living and conditions. Businesses have to be accompanied in meeting obligations. The market is leaning toward non-EU countries and we have to be mindful of these trends.

2. CAP Plans contribution to the LTVRA and an update on LTVRA with exchange of views

The DG AGRI team responsible for the **Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas (LTVRA)**, **AGRI.D1**, provided the presentation ‘Taking stock of how the Common Agricultural Policy strategic plans contribute to the objectives of the Long-term vision for the EU’s rural areas’. The study focused on screening and mapping the direct contribution of the choices made by 28 Member States in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plans to rural areas beyond farming.

According to the study, the most relevant interventions for rural areas are (a) investments, (b) cooperation, (c) knowledge & advice and (d) support to rural businesses as part of installation. A number of support instruments for farmers are also relevant to the Rural Vision, including support to young farmers, eco-schemes, agri-environment climate measures and support to areas facing natural constraints, but they were not included as interventions contributing “directly” to rural areas in financial terms. The study found that, while the whole CAP contributes to rural areas indirectly, EUR 24.6 billion contributes directly to rural areas beyond farming.

In conclusion, the study found that the new CAP framework provides broad and flexible possibilities to support rural areas. These are used in very different ways and to various degrees by Member States. LEADER is the main overarching instrument contributing to the Rural Vision. A review of the contribution of CAP plans to rural areas will be needed when LEADER local development strategies will be adopted and related indicators updated but there are already concerns that LEADER is asked to cover more population without additional resources.

Beyond LEADER, the support provided seems too limited to address all needs in rural areas, in particular in areas related to social inclusion, infrastructures and basic services, business development and support to knowledge and innovation beyond farming. Complementary interventions from other funds are expected in these domains. The most relevant funds referred to in the CSPs are the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). However, the data presented in the CAP plans are too limited to offer a holistic picture.

In the ensuing exchange of views on how the CAP contributes to rural areas and what needs improvement, members highlighted:

- the **potential of organic farming and agroecology to contribute to resilient and prosperous rural areas**, in particular in “organic districts” which are local organic food systems created through participatory approaches which bring together multiple types of actors (organic and non-organic farmers, processors, civil society, local administrations and also consumers), helping farmers to make a living either in depopulated areas or areas where farmers have been displaced;
- the value of support to **certification costs for quality and organic products** (would need to be 100% co-financing rates), the importance of support for **collective and decentralised processing facilities** (including under cooperation and LEADER), the need for keeping activities in **areas facing natural constraints** and the importance of **advisory services** to support transition, all of which have been used to support organic districts so far;
- the importance of maintenance and conversion funds for organic;
- the need for **more research** on organic farming and agroecology;
- the fact that too strong requirements on environment without sufficient support can also discourage farmers;
- the importance of **generational renewal and support for young farmers, including ensuring they can enter farming without being tied to high mortgage costs, supporting the creation of landbanks**;
- the fact that **generational renewal strongly depends on the vibrancy of rural areas** in which new and young farmers need to have a **good living conditions and make a positive contribution to their community**; the fact that many young and new farmers often work only part-time in farming and part-time in diverse types of jobs, hence the importance of a diverse job market; the need for **access to education, health and cultural services** for farmers’ families and other rural residents;
- the need to **increase support for young farmers under the CAP**, adopting an integrated approach which does not only support installation but also income diversification, generational renewal through cooperation, support to education, knowledge, advice.
- The need for **young farmers and rural young people to be better represented in decision-making bodies**, on the CAP and on other programmes such as regional policy or programmes such as ERASMUS.
- the need to support **access to land** and mitigate the overall land concentration and land price increase trends; the need to use capping of funds to reduce the gap between small and medium size farmers and large farmers in terms of funding allocation; the importance of regulation on soils;

- the key role of **beekeepers** in rural areas;
- the need to grant **payments per average work unit** to support **employment** in rural areas, considering on-farm processing and direct sales also as an agricultural activity, and the importance of supporting **small farmers** to maintain a vibrant socio-economic base in rural areas;
- the close connections between rural development and "**food systems**" as a wider approach going beyond farming which should be at the centre of the rural vision, calling for a strong food systems framework law;
- the need for farmers and food processors to receive **fair prices** for their products while prices should remain accessible for consumers;
- the importance of **tourism for rural areas**, 10 to 15% of which is agrotourism while 85-90% of tourism operators are not involved in farming; the latter reporting that they have been associated to reflections on CSPs and are happy about the results in only one country (AT). In two countries there was no consultation at all and in most countries support for these activities is very limited;
- the need for LEADER local action groups to benefit from multi-fund approaches and to play a **greater role** in community development, training, facilitation, and bringing together a diverse set of actors across a range of subjects and sectors also beyond farming (tourism, mobility, digital etc.).
- the need to pay attention to **rural diversity** (e.g difference between **remote** and **mountain areas** compared to areas closer to large cities); the importance of support to **areas facing natural constraints** should be better accounted for;
- the regrettable limited support to social inclusion under approved CSPs;
- the fact that the CAP alone cannot address all rural needs and other funds also need to contribute.

More specifically about the rural vision, members highlighted:

- the key role of the **rural parliaments** and the **European rural parliament**, which have been involved in the Rural Pact and Rural Vision implementation from the beginning and, while not agreeing with all aspects of it, value their existence and the opportunity to exchange they have brought;
- the lack of information on how the vast array of rural stakeholders have been involved in the reflections on CAP plans and the need to **ensure the same level of engagement in all Member States**;
- the wish to hear more about Commission's progress on **rural proofing** and the need for Member States and regions to also commit to rural proofing;
- The importance of the **governance of the Rural Pact**;
- the important role of LAGs and of the **social economy** and of **facilitators** who can help local actors access support schemes which tend to be too complex;
- the need to support farming but also **economic diversification beyond farming** and economic actors in other sectors; and
- the potential of the new **Rural Pact community platform** created and the opportunities for exchanging ideas, which should build more on Horizon projects.

Updates on the implementation of the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas and new tools

a. Toolkit on EU funds for rural areas

A representative of the Commissions unit JRC.B3 provided an overview of the 'Toolkit on EU funds' that will be launched between December 2023 and January 2024. The Rural toolkit is the comprehensive guide to EU funding and support opportunities for rural areas in the European Union. It aims to help local authorities, institutions and stakeholders, businesses and individuals to identify and take advantage of existing EU funds, programmes and other funding and support initiatives, and to foster development in rural territories.

The Rural toolkit is part of the action plan of the European Commission's Long-term vision for the EU's rural areas in the EU. The toolkit provides a unique entry point to all existing initiatives, with comprehensive information on available resources, and explains why these are relevant for rural areas.

Practical examples featured on the platform encourage knowledge sharing and peer learning among rural communities. The 'Get inspired section' offers insights on successful initiatives implemented in rural areas across the EU, and on how to combine EU funds effectively to maximise their impact and address specific local needs.

b. Rural action plan implementation

AGRI.D1 provided a presentation on 'The implementation of the Rural Action Plan as part of the Long-term vision for the EU's rural areas', followed by a presentation on the 'Rural Pact Community Platform'.

The Rural Action Plan includes 30 actions under the responsibility of line DGs and DG AGRI – 24 thematic actions and 6 horizontal actions to support the implementation and improve governance. All actions have been launched. More specifically, two of the horizontal actions are completed (Rural Observatory and Rural Pact) and four are at an advanced stage of implementation. A Rural Pact Coordination Group was established in 2023 to steer the development of the Rural Pact and the Rural Pact Support Office was launched to provide facilitation services for three years to the Rural Pact Community.

A number of forthcoming events were mentioned including two good practice webinars on '[Rural Areas in the energy transition](#)' (24 October 2023, online) and on '[Enhancing access to health services in rural areas](#)' (30 November 2023, online), and the '[High-level Policy Forum on 'Shaping the Future of Rural Areas'](#)' (27-29 September 2023, Spain).

c. Rural Pact Community Platform

AGRI.D1 presented the [Rural Pact Community Platform](#), which is a collaborative tool launched on 29 June. It includes the "rural revitalisation platform", a flagship initiative under the "Stronger" pillar of the EU Rural action plan, targeted at stakeholders working on improving the situation of depopulated rural areas. As Rural Pact members in all rural areas share the same needs for collaboration than those working on depopulated areas, the tool has been designed as a one-stop-shop for all rural actors.

The platform has three objectives, allowing the members of the Community to:

- Stay informed (offering latest news and events, both from members and from the Commission and the Rural Pact Support Office; good practices and other resources);
- Connect with each other (by creating their profile and enabling them to find and contact their peers);

- Exchange and interact (by joining existing “Community groups” dedicated to specific topics or to geographical levels).

Community groups are initiated and moderated by “Community coordinators” that are rural stakeholders at EU or national level. Current groups cover the following themes: “Women in rural areas”, “Smart villages”, “Migrants”, “Mountain areas” and the “Rural Pact Support Office”. Stakeholders interested in creating a group should [fill in the EoI form after having read the guidelines](#). Groups can either be in English or in another EU language if the group targets stakeholders in a specific country. Automated translation is available.

The tool is being continuously updated, both from a technical and editorial point of view. Suggestions of useful content or connections with existing sites and platforms are welcome at ec-vision-rural-areas@ec.europa.eu .

3. Implementation/State of play of Rural Development programmes and National Strategic Plans and other CAP related aspects

a. Mid-term review MFF – update

The Commission representative from DG BUDG presented the mid-term review of the MFF which takes into account new challenges (inflation, interest rates and energy prices increase), even though such revision is not a legal obligation. The approval of the mid-term review should occur by December for implementation as from 2024.

Three policy priorities are at the basis of the mid-term review:

- War in Ukraine

The EU has supported Ukraine through macro-financial assistance. The Commission has proposed a structural solution for the year 2024-2027 until the end of the current MFF. The flexible support will be up to EUR 50 billion and will be divided between grants, guarantees, and loans.

- Migration and external challenges

The Commission has proposed to reinforce funds for border control and increase support to developing and neighbouring countries.

- Technological competitiveness

The Commission has introduced new projects for technological competitiveness and reinforced existing instruments. The Commission has proposed to top up InvestEU, Innovation Fund, Horizon, Innovation Council, Cohesion Policy Instruments. Rural development funds will not be involved in this exercise.

Two technical/administrative adjustments were applied:

1. Funding costs: increase of the interest rate for NextGenerationEU
2. Fixed costs: impact of public administration costs

Following questions from members, Commission services clarified that plans in relation to Ukraine cover the period until 2027. Thus, funds may cover also reconstruction based on development of events. The MFF will be financed by its own

resources, with the same financing method of the rest of the MFF. This mid-term review is a very targeted revision on three specific policy priorities and no increase of the budget for agriculture and rural areas in light of inflation is proposed. The Commission assumes that MSs will be able to implement their CSPs, and that they will prioritise the most relevant actions.

b. CAP Plans calendar of studies – DG AGRI

Representatives of unit DG AGRI, A3, presented the general framework on evaluation and studies, planned by DG AGRI, relevant for the new cycle of CAP.

The evaluations planned to be published this year are related to LEADER and the EU School Scheme, and next year to the regime for the outermost regions and the smaller Asian islands. Among the evaluations planned later are the interim evaluation on the CAP strategic plans and on wine plantings.

Members were encouraged to see links in the presentation on the available study and toolbox related to **integrated pest management** and a database that can further be disseminated among farmers to help them adopt integrated pest management practices.

Forthcoming studies also include the effects of crises measures from the exceptional measures in dairy sector during the crisis in 2014 - 2015. Another study is ongoing on diversification of protein sources in feed, which will also feed into the protein strategy of the Commission. Another study has just started on the land use to address competition notably on the competition between the different usage for food, feed, energy, artificialization, and forests. A study is also launched on the working conditions of farm employees in EU agriculture. The European Parliament has requested a pilot project on improving the place of organic products in collective catering.

In relation to uptake of measures in the CSPs, the Commission will get comprehensive data in 2025. An interim evaluation will be done in 2026. We will further study the cost of changing practices but also changing farming systems.

It was reiterated that the [European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP | European CAP Network \(europa.eu\)](#) is part of the CAP network and is aiming to support all stakeholders to better assess the CAP performance. They offer methodological guidance, capacity building, knowledge sharing, communication and networking opportunities.

c. Demonstration of the public catalogue of CSP interventions – DG AGRI

A presentation was made to show how to find information on the interventions planned by Member States in their CSPs through the [Catalogue of CAP interventions \(europa.eu\)](#).

d. CAP implementation- state of play of CSP amendments

Representatives of DG AGRI, unit C1, presented a state of play of submitted and approved amendments of the CAP Strategic Plans.

4. Any other business

a. Open Strategic Autonomy

Following the request from members, the Chair provided additional details related to open strategic autonomy (OSA) and the work on the legislative framework for sustainable food systems (FSFS). It was clarified that resilience and OSA are one of the top priorities of the work programme of the Spanish Presidency. The informal meeting of Heads of States and Government in Granada on 6 October is expected to work on the subject, based a report prepared by the Presidency: “*Resilient Europe 2023 – a future-oriented approach to reinforce the EU’s Open Strategic Autonomy and Global Leadership*” (publication expected in September). The report has identified 4 sectors that play a decisive role: energy, food, health and digital. OSA could also be part of the subjects that deserve more attention in the European Food Security Preparedness and Response Mechanism (EFSCM), in particular around the forthcoming study on risks and vulnerabilities of the EU food supply chain.

b. Legislative Framework for Sustainable Food Systems

In relation to the work on a legislative framework for sustainable food systems (FSFS), the Commission representative underlined the importance of this initiative under the Farm to Fork Strategy and that the Commission continues to be ambitious with regard to the European Green Deal and its implementation. A legislative framework on sustainable food systems aims to accelerate and enable the transition to sustainable food systems. Preparatory work on the proposal is ongoing, focusing on the accompanying impact assessment and no date for its adoption is currently scheduled.

(e-signed)

Pierluigi LONDERO
in the absence of
Catherine GESLAIN-LANEELLE

List of participants– Minutes
Meeting of the Civil Dialog Group on the CAP Strategic Plans and Horizontal Matters
14 September 2023

AEEU - Agroecology Europe
AREFLH - Assemblée des Régions Européennes Fruitières Légumières et Horticoles
AREPO - Association des régions européennes des produits d'origine
BeeLife - Bee Life - European Beekeeping Organisation
BirdLife Europe
CEETAR - Confédération Européenne des Entrepreneurs de Travaux Techniques Agricoles
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
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 - TR needed
EFOW - European Federation of Origin Wines
ELARD - European Leader Association for Rural Development
ELO - European Landowner's Organisation
EMB - European Milk Board
ERCA - European Rural Community Alliance
EUFRAS - European Forum for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services

EURAF - European Agroforestry Federation
EUROMONTANA
FEFAC - European Feed Manufacturers Federation / Fédération européenne des fabricants d'aliments composés
FoE – Friends of the Earth
FoodDrinkEurope
Freshfel Europe
GEOPA-COPA - European Employers' Group of Professional Agricultural Organisations
IBMA - International Biocontrol Manufacturers Association
IFOAM - International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements European Regional Group
ORIGINEU - Organisation pour un réseau international d'indications géographiques
PFP - Primary Food Processors
Rural Tour - European Federation of Rural Tourism
Rurality, Environment, Development
WWF - World Wide Fund for Nature
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS
Ad-hoc experts ECORYS