



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Directorate F. Rural development II
The Director

Brussels,
AGRI.DDG2.F/MGA(2021)8605151

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE CIVIL DIALOGUE GROUP - RURAL DEVELOPMENT

**Meeting via videoconference (Interactio)
on 26 November 2021**

Chair: Silvia MICHELINI

Delegations present: All Organisations were present except Apure, EuropaBio, ECPA, ELARD, FoodDrinkEurope, IFTF

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

Approved

2. Nature of the meeting

Virtual meeting, non-public

3. List of points discussed

Adoption of the Rules of Procedures

Rules of Procedure have been approved, with some concerns already expressed in other CDGs. Ares(2021)7382283.

Adoption of the CAP – Key elements of the political agreement as regards Rural Development. Implementing Acts

The Commission representative presented the broad lines of the secondary legislation and the related indicative timing for adoption. As regards rural development, there are three articles included in a delegated act (animal welfare, genetic resources and quality schemes) and one article in an implementing act (visibility and publicity). Finally, the

implementing act related to the CAP Plan content was also briefly presented. The CDG members appreciated the information shared, insisting on the need for transparency. More in particular, there were questions and remarks related to the publication of observation letters and assessment tools used by the Commission. Some stakeholders also raised concerns about the approval process and the capacity of the Commission to ensure that Plans are actually delivering towards the CAP objectives and the Green Deal.

Finally, a couple of more detailed questions related to the possibility of farmers receiving the small farmers payment to participate in eco-schemes and the implementation of the 3% reserve for risk management under BISS. The Commission representative clarified that indeed observation letters will be made public, that the approval process is subject to collegial decision and therefore all services in the Commission will endorse the final outcome. As regards the detailed questions, the Commission representative indicated that the small farmer payment replaces all direct payments, including eco-schemes and therefore, it is correct that they cannot participate in such schemes. On risk management, the 3% set aside from the direct payment to the farmer can be used for a risk management instrument planned under rural development support or any other risk management instrument where the farmer participates.

State of Play of Strategic Plans preparation, and general timeline for their assessment and adoption in 2022

The Commission representative outlined the process of adoptions of the CAP Strategic Plans. The deadline to submit the Plans by MS is 1/1/2021. The Commission is aware that the deadline is challenging for some MS. The Commission may send observation letters to MS on the submitted Plans within three months of submission and will then intensively discuss outstanding issues with MS until the further submission to adopt the Plans on time; in any case, the process must be concluded during 2022.

Currently, the Commission conducts informal discussion with all MS and provides support to them in this phase of preparation by MS of their plans. MS are at different stages of preparation with some MS having already mature drafts while others are still at drafting stage. According to information available to the Commission and presented to CDG most MS have provided whole or parts of the Plans to public.

The Commission representative confirmed that the Observation Letters will be made public. To the question about internal consultation of the Plans, the Commission representative replied that DG AGRI is in the lead of the process and the internal consultation is a standard, well-established process in which all key DGs are closely involved.

Overview of the amendments of Rural Development Programmes for the transition period, including use of Recovery Funds for Rural Development

The Commission representative presented a report on the progress of transition programming and on how the additional funds made available for 2021-2022 have been programmed in comparison with the initial programming period (2014-2020). As of 18 November 2021, 98.3% of the available transitional funds had been programmed. The Commission representative provided details of the distribution of these funds by

priorities, focus areas and measures, as well as the specific distribution of the funds made available through the EU Recovery Instrument (EURI).

A question was raised on “the real impact of the payments on the priorities and focus areas (especially on M4)”. The Commission representative replied that the amounts presented were programmed amounts rather than payments and that the implementation of these funds on particular measures and focus areas would be monitored in due time through the existing reporting framework.

Recovery and Resilience Plans – Aspects relevant for agriculture and Rural Development

The Commission representative presented the agriculture and rural development aspects of the Recovery and Resilience Plans, stressing the importance of the EU-Post COVID 19 Recovery context, recalling how the Resilience and Recovery Facility (RRF) fitted in the EU response to the coronavirus crisis.

The Commission representative presented the timeline for adoption of the RRF, its key features (purpose, size, functioning, delivery mode, timelines), content of RRP, mentioned the role of the Commission, Council and Member States in the process, gave a state of play on submission, approval and disbursement of pre-financing, recalled the links with agriculture and rural development, gave an overview of key measures under the 6 pillars of the RRF, presented the state of play on use of the RRF towards the green and digital transitions and gave an overview of the type of measures relevant for agriculture and rural development that Member States have included in their RRP.

Fit for 55: expected consequences on certain sectors, notably agriculture and forestry

At the very heart of the Green Deal is the target of reaching climate neutrality in EU by 2050, meaning that EU emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are reduced and residual emissions are balanced by removals. This ambition became a legal obligation, enshrined in the new European Climate Law. Moreover, the Climate Law binds the EU to reducing emissions by at least 55% by 2030, more ambitious than as planned for the Paris agreement. To respond to these new challenges, the European Commission has adopted a new climate package on 14 July 2021, a set of inter-connected proposals in different policy areas and economic sectors, including for emissions and removals from agriculture and the land sector. Modifications concerning emissions and removals from agriculture are proposed following a step-wise approach: until 2024 the current legislation will remain in place; between 2025 and 2030 there is an EU target for the sink (-310 MtCO₂eq); between 2030 and 2035 the combination of emissions and removals of the land sector in a single pillar and climate neutrality in 2035. The current legislative set does not offer direct incentives to land managers for the increase of the sink. For this reason, the Commission is working on rewarding schemes for the mitigation effort of land managers.

The new Common Agricultural Policy remains the main tool supporting land managers in supporting practices and technologies to reduce emissions from livestock and soil management; promote soil carbon protection (in grassland and peatlands); promote

practices for soil carbon increase in depleted soils; promote afforestation and agroforestry; promote production of biomass sustainably; cover upfront investments and additional costs linked to the green transition; support innovation and knowledge transfer.

Participants asked about the engagement of farmers and foresters and their role in the context of the new climate ambitions and in the Bioeconomy, and the overall necessity of ensuring that all environmental objective are perceived.

Farmers and foresters have the unique role of sequestering carbon from the atmosphere with the photosynthesis and also to provide sustainable produced biomass for the bioeconomy. Their effort can be recognised by the potential possibilities that voluntary private markets can offer in buying credits, while ensuring do-not-harm principle on other environmental objectives. Farmers and foresters must also have a more active role in the bioeconomy supply chain, for example with first transformation on farm, and avoiding being simply a provider of biomass. The new CAP will still have, and even reinforced, tools for creating enabling conditions.

Update on EU CAP networking

The Commission representative provided an update on contracts for supporting networking activities at the EU level. Following publication of single tender with four Lots in 2020, three contracts were signed in July 2021. Lot 1 - Support for networking concerning the design and implementation of CSP, Lot 2 - Support for networking activities focusing on innovation and knowledge exchange and Lot 4 - Logistical and communication support for networking activities, while for Lot 3 - European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP, the current support contract is still running.

Pending launch of the EU CAP network (foreseen during 2022), there has been no interruption in networking activities at the EU level. Networking activities continue in the interim period under ENRD/EIP AGRI 'label' and their scope is not limited to RDPs only, but can also include aspects related to the future CAP and CSPs. The Commission representative also presented some ideas on the possible governance structure of the future EU CAP Network, based on inputs from stakeholders in the current Rural Networks governance bodies and in previous meetings of the CDG for rural development.

Long Term Vision for Rural Development. State of Play and Future Steps

The Commission representative presented the Long Term Vision for Rural Areas. The presentation contained an explanation of the content of the Communication published in June 2021, especially as regards what is the vision for rural areas in 2040, and what is the pathway proposed to reach this vision. The Communication contains indeed an EU action plan, covering several policy areas relevant for the development of rural areas.

This action plan will be implemented progressively in collaboration with different Directorates General through the European Commission. The Commission also underlined that, beyond this EU action plan, the Communication proposes the

development of a Rural Pact, with the aim to engage all levels of governance and stakeholders in a cooperation framework.

One question was about how stakeholders will continue to be involved in these actions. The Commission representative answered that some activities of the European Network for Rural Development are already initiated to engage reflections on Rural revitalisation and are about to be launched on rural proofing. Besides, a first conference should be organised next year to initiate the Rural Pact.

Another question was on rural proofing at Commission level, and explanations were provided about how Territorial Impact Assessments can be used for major initiatives, and how guidance questions can help different directorates to assess the potential relevance of their initiatives for rural areas.

As regards synergies between funds and policies, the Commission explained that this was at the core of this communication: no single fund or policy could respond comprehensively to all the needs of rural areas, so the emphasis is to be put on coordination between policies.

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

The meeting was very informative on major current issues.

5. Next meeting

The next meeting will take place next year, date to be defined.

6. List of participants

Please check below

Silvia MICHELINI

List of participants

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Member Organisations	Number of Persons
Association des régions européennes des produits d'origine (AREPO)	1
Stichting BirdLife Europe (BirdLife Europe)	2
Confédération Européenne des Entrepreneurs de Travaux Techniques Agricoles, Ruraux et Forestiers (CEETTAR)	1
European Council of Young farmers (CEJA)	2
European Liaison Committee for Agriculture and agri-food trade (CELCAA)	4
Confédération Européenne des Propriétaires Forestiers (CEPF)	1
European agri-cooperatives (COGECA)	6
European farmers (COPA)	7
European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)	1
European Environmental Bureau (EEB)	6
European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP)	1
European Landowners' Organization asbl (ELO asbl)	3
European Milk Board (EMB)	1
European Rural Community Alliance (ERCA)	1
European Agroforestry Federation (EURAF)	1

European Federation of Rural Tourism (RuralTour)	1
Euromontana (Euromontana)	1
IFOAM Organics Europe	2
Pesticide Action Network Europe (PAN Europe)	1
PREPARE Partnership for Rural Europe (PREPARE)	1
Ruralité-Environnement-Développement (RED)	1
SMEUnited	2
WWF European Policy Programme (WWF EPO)	3