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FINAL MINUTES

Meeting of the Civil Dialogue Group RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Date: 19/09/2017

Chair: Dominique FAYEL

Organisations present: All Organisations were present, except APURE, ECPA, and ERCA.

1. Approval of the agenda (and of the minutes of previous meeting¹)

The agenda and the minutes of the previous meeting (15/2/2017) were adopted on 19th September 2017.

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was non-public.

3. List of points discussed

Elections of the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the CDG

Before opening the elections process, COGECA informed the members that Peter Pascher was a candidate for the Vice-Chair position, unfortunately he has applied with some delay (1 day) as COPA didn't see that the call for applying was sent at the same time as the official invitation and draft agenda highlighting that the Commission changed the procedures. Thus, it asked CDG members if they would agree, knowing that there is no competition for this seat, to accept the candidature of Mr Pascher.

The Commission explained that indeed the candidature was received with some delay. It was ready to accept this late candidature under two conditions: that all CDG members without any exception would agree to accept this late candidature and that if accepted, it should not set a precedent for future elections.

Members of the CDG were invited to express their views.

WWF stated that there was no objection from their side, it has the wish to share information and to keep an open and dialogue spirit for all the CDG. As there is no other candidature, it is open to this flexible approach.

¹ If not adopted by written procedure (CIRCABC)

For BirdLife, in principle, there was no problem in having another election. Nonetheless, it regretted that the rules seem sometimes to be in favour of some members and not of others. It explained that the candidature of one BirdLife colleague for a similar vice-chair position was rejected for some delay too in another CDG even if all members of that group did accept the candidature. Thus, as an alternative, it suggested having the election for Mr Pascher at the next meeting. This would also allow the announcement of this candidature to be made in advance. In any case, BirdLife assured that a dialogue within the Chairmanship and COPA would be maintained.

EMB could not vote for Mr Pascher because he was absent during this meeting.

Answers from the Commission:

Regarding the possibility of having the election of the Vice-Chair during the coming meeting, the Commission would have to face significant administrative difficulties to allow this procedure, notably because the mandate for Vice-Chair is of one year. Thus, it could not confirm for the moment that this procedure would be allowed, but it would see if this can be done. Due to the comments of the members of the CDG, the Commission could not further proceed with the election of the second seat for the Vice-Chair, thus, it was decided to hold only the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair who applied within the time limit.

The candidates for the Chair and the Vice-Chair presented themselves before the elections.

The Commission reminded the participants the rules to follow for the Chairman.

Mr Dominique Fayel from Euromontana was elected as Chair (40 votes in favour - 0 against – 1 abstention) for a 2^o mandate.

Ms Trees Robijns from BirdLife was elected as Vice-Chair (39 votes in favour - 1 against – 1 abstention) for a 4^o mandate.

The Commission congratulated the new Chair and Vice-Chair. The Commission reminded the Chairman that minutes have now to be sent back to the Commission in 10 working days. For the reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs, the system will change and members will have to download the forms and bring them back to the meetings to have their costs reimbursed.

Future of the CAP post 2020 (Rural development):

- Feedback on the results of the CAP consultation and on the event of 7th July

The Commission gave a presentation that is available on CIRCABC on the results of the consultation presented during the event organised by DG Agri on 7th July 2017. It summarized the results and explained how the different answers received were treated.

The Commission focused on different questions raised in the consultation and how they were answered. It also informed the meeting about the orientations for the future discussion: they will be on maintaining coherence with EU priorities; the importance of subsidiarity and that the EU policies should act when some EU added value can be delivered; the result-based budgeting which will increase and finally the simplification and modernisation of the policy.

The Commission informed the participants that the expected Communication should be published before the end of the year.

➤ Discussion

Questions from the members of the CDG

WWF stressed that the public consultation was not necessarily designed in an easy way to express its positions and that the debate should go beyond the agriculture world. It regretted that 80% of the answers received, coming notably from a public campaign organised by WWF with other organisations, were not taken into account in the presentation made by the Commission.

COPA asked for more details about the difference in numbers between the answers received online and the others.

RED stated that CAP has first the vocation to support agriculture and the environmental and social changes it has to face. Nonetheless, it was necessary that all actors participating in this CDG should acknowledge their strong ambition for rural territories, which was not the object of this consultation. CAP would not be able to finance alone the development of rural areas, so there was the need to have other financial possibilities and to have an inter-fund for rural development.

Answers from the Commission

The Commission explained the need to keep a balance between the number of open questions and the internal capacity to digest all the answers. More than 60 people had already assessed the replies within DG Agri. In addition, the Commission wanted to have some answers to some specific questions, this is why a lot of closed questions were chosen in the consultation.

The Commission acknowledged that in the presentation it had not treated the specific case of the public campaign and it would be addressed by the unit responsible for the public consultation.

The difference in numbers can be explained by the difference between the completed answers received and the partial answers received when people have just answered some questions of the questionnaire.

Regarding rural development policy, according to the Commission, this policy is close to a specific sector and thus should be part of the CAP, but it also has a certain interest to interact with other policies. This is the reason why a political agreement was reached to have a common framework for all structural funds in order that they should all work together better. In some cases, like the support to broadband, it works well, but depending on the Member States and on the different ministries in charge, things were not always so easy. Links between policies and territories and interactions between the different players should be improved. In DG Regio, they are dealing with rural areas too and quite a significant part of its budget is also spent on rural areas to generate jobs and growth, but using different activities than in rural development policies. It had to be seen how the public perceived possibilities to continue working between the funds.

Questions from the members:

RED stated that citizens from rural areas have expressed their choices by voting for dangerous populists. It stated that in the Cohesion policy, money spent on rural areas is

falling not rising, so it insisted on the need not to forget rural territories and called for an Agenda for rural areas.

ECVC explained that what is at stake is the future policy choices, not really the technical details. What is important is the implications for the future CAP and to know which models of agriculture we would like to support. The strategic axis should be presented. ECVC is in favour of family farming with some local production centres and with an agro-ecological model. It would like the focus to be put on small and medium sized agricultural units and investments in these farms supported. It also supports some adaptations for the second pillar which has to be improved and the question of capping the payments should be raised. It also questioned the wish to have a more result-based approach and warned against more bureaucracy for small farmers, the choice and number of indicators being crucial to simplify or not the implementation of the policy. Finally, the representative of ECVC asked when the Omnibus regulation is supposed to be adopted.

CEETTAR explained that Brexit will have some financial impacts on the EU budget and even if the CAP is considered as a crucial policy, it is impossible to know the budget that will be available. It supported also the need to maintain a good dynamic for rural development and asked about the articulation between the consultation results and the Cork declaration. It also asked the Commission about the place of forestry in the CAP.

COPA wondered how the detailed replies in the consultation had been taken into account and asked the Commission to clarify how it took into account all the alternatives, knowing that for many questions of the consultation, boxes had to be ticked, so there was a limited possibility of answers.

Answers from the Commission

Regarding family farming, there are so many different forms of farming in Europe that one model cannot just be promoted. The CAP is not working with just THE model. Even for family farming, very different organisations can be behind this concept, being multifunctional farms or farms with a few employees but a large amount of land. A lot of farmers can make their living from farming. Their situations can be more or less difficult, especially if they have some natural constraints to face, if they are well connected or not and the CAP will never be able to compensate all disadvantages, so the farm has also to exist by its own merit. But the Commission explained that the CAP has a lot of means to help to overcome these obstacles. Taking the issue of generation renewal, this is an issue in some countries, but not in all. There is a dedicated measure for young farmers at EU level, and there are some possibilities for training and advice. The advisory organisations can help them too. So, a lot is available on the table. But, the Member States have to activate these possibilities.

Regarding the budget: indeed, with the Brexit, between € 10 and 12 billion a year would not arrive in the EU budget so will have less money in the future. So, either Member States put more money on the table or some arrangements between policies will have to be made and all policies want to have their piece of cake. Thus, this is a difficult question and this is up to the politicians to decide how they want to finance common policies in the future.

Regarding result-based orientations, the Commission agreed that we should not end up with double obligations, controlling all the little elements on the one hand and the result-based approach based on evidence on the other hand. So one system should remain with very basic eligible rules, if the result-based approach is chosen and the controls should rely on the efficiency of Member States controls.

On the Omnibus regulation, triologue discussion has started but three meetings are still to come. Hopefully, an agreement should be reached before the end of the year and the Commission hoped that the regulation will be adopted before the end of 2017.

Regarding the mandate of Cork and the EU consultation: there is not a lot of differences between the two, they are not conflicting but Cork was more concentrating on rural areas compared to this consultation which was more focusing on the first pillar and on the support to farmers. Thus, the two parts of the policy have been well discussed.

Regarding forestry, indeed some forestry activities are integrated with the CAP because they are looked at from a nature angle and a lot of farmers often have forestry activities. Member States designated their programmes into that direction more than for forest professionals, even if the Commission recognised that it has to be further looked at.

The Commission reassured members that positions in the consultation were well read, and explained, firstly, that the EU consultation was not the only place to make their voice heard and, secondly, that the Commission is required to make a proposal for 28 Member States with a simplified policy. The Commission is working a lot on this challenge.

Questions from the members:

EEB acknowledged the efforts made to have the results publicly available. Nonetheless, it regretted the absence of classification between organisations registered in the transparency registry, public authorities and individual contributions. It referred here to the way in which the greening consultation was published on the Commission website. It would also welcome mentioning the name of the organisations on the same form as the answers to have all the information available. This is of course when the organisations agreed to make it public. EEB also asked about a more precise timeline regarding the Communication and the legislative proposals. It also explained that EEB position is now available on line.

For BirdLife, the public consultation had given a clear picture, with a strong support for farming, but also farming ecologically sustainable. It regretted that the big picture is sometimes missing in the discussion, whereas the general public is interested by this big picture. It also regretted the absence of clear identity and clear vision for rural development, especially at a time where the existence of the EU is under threat.

ELARD asked the Commission about the place of the LAGs and CLLD. The CLLD opportunity does not work well in practice and ELARD has the impression that LAGs are abandoned. Thus, it wished that it had been more visible in the presentation that LAGs represent life in rural areas.

CEPF stated that forestry is quite important not only for environment, but also for rural areas, in terms of climate change mitigation, biodiversity, and as a source of jobs and growth. Thus, it strongly encouraged the Commission not to leave forestry out due to the importance of this sector on the long term.

CELCAA encouraged the introduction of more vertical integration in the meat sector, between the different actors of the supply chain in a virtuous way from an environmental point of view and for saving energy.

For BirdLife, it seemed that the Living Land Campaign has been little analysed so far. This is not clear where the results of this campaign have been presented. As this campaign represents 80% of the total answers received, it would appreciate having more attention retained on this specific campaign conducted by BirdLife and other organisations. On the conference on the 7th July, it regretted that the online tool had not

always worked well as the questions were not coming through. Finally, BirdLife clarified that its position would soon be published and it will present how BirdLife wants to have a transition towards a more sustainable policy in the CAP.

RED called for a strong signal in favour of rural territories to avoiding the decrease of the co-funding part in the second pillar, the pillar which is currently co-funded by Member States and regions. It also recalled the importance of listening to the outcomes of the EU consultation, but also to the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee. The citizens' voices are also expressed in these assemblies.

COPA was really satisfied by the enthusiasm created by this EU consultation. Citizens had understood that behind the farmers' work, food and the place where people live is at stake. There is a large diversity of farming situations so the question has to be raised on how future supports will be given. Regarding the future of rural development, the recognition of multifunctionality can help avoiding desertification in a significant number of areas. ERDF could support some tourism activities or some land planning. Thus, a better coordination between the funds should be encouraged. In addition, integrating the regional capital in calculations of regional wealth can produce an unrealistic vision of the situation as the capital has a higher GDP than the rest of the territory. Some new calculation methods should be found in order to be able to support the poor areas which exist, even in the richer regions.

Answers from the Commission

The Commission explained that it has an obligation to make the results of the consultation public. It has a good note of all the suggestions to improve the display of the results and will share it in-house to see what is possible to improve but it is afraid that its possibilities are limited.

The Commission agreed that the consultation could have been done in a better way, but in its view the rural development part was more integrated in the Cork declaration and the LEADER approach was well integrated in that.

For the Commission, this is sometimes necessary to enter into the details as the CDG gathers experts on the subject and because this is difficult to focus only on 3-4 core ideas. Thus, a balance has to be found between the global picture and the details. For instance, it is necessary to have detailed requirements on rural development measures as it has to be proven that the money is well spent to achieve the results targeted by the policy.

The Commission recognised that the multifund approach with different rules to respect and with different funds might be too difficult. DG Agri has meetings with colleagues from other DGs, notably DG Regio to exchange thoughts on the subject.

Forestry is part of rural development policy. For the Commission, the tools used for forestry in this programming period were satisfactory and all the tools cannot be reopened during each new programming period.

The support outside agriculture for rural development is normally a question of national preferences. The Commission put tools on the table and then Member States had to seize them, but the Commission cannot force the Member States to use them.

The Communication should be published by the end of the year but the Commission could not give a precise date so far. The legal proposals should normally be presented after the presentation of the Multi Financial Framework which is supposed to happen in May-June 2018.

The Chairman concluded this session by recalling the need to have an economic approach (through supply-chains) and a territorial approach within the CAP.

Simplification: recommendations of the High Level Group on Simplification - Conclusions:

- The Commission gave a presentation that is available on CIRCABC.

The Commission presented the main conclusions of the report published in July by the high-level experts group lead by the former EU Commissioner Siim Kallas.

For two years, this group of experts worked to recommend how to improve the management of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), to cut red tape and facilitate the implementation for beneficiaries.

The following proposals were particularly mentioned: equal treatment for similar projects with the same rules; shorter regulation, fewer guidelines; national checks should be sufficient; a stable yet flexible framework and the single audit principle.

Questions from the members of the CDG

UEAPME invited all members to read the full report in particular the interesting proposals regarding subsidiarity and flexibility. It encouraged increased subsidiarity with local and regional actors and really involving them, not only during the consultation period, but also during the implementation. It underlined that in different cases territorial policies have worked well because they worked well with social economic partners and did not work well when these actors were not well involved. It also underlined the issue of pockets of poverty in regions which has to be addressed.

BirdLife asked for details about the suggested alignment of EU funds, knowing that a common framework already exists; asked about how national checks will be ensured to be of sufficient quality; and how the normal legislative procedure would be respected when cleaning up the rules.

Ifoam reminded the Commission that simplification has to be done for beneficiaries, not just for managing authorities. It suggested starting with the farmer who has to submit a form and see how his life can be simplified (avoiding different thresholds, and having to do different estimations).

EMB asked the Commission why taxes have to be paid on the grant received by farmers in Belgium.

Answers from the Commission

The Commission agreed that pockets of poverty represent a real issue as rural development policy is looking at regions in average. For rural development policy, Member States have the right to target specific regions and support only them, based on a specific analysis. Some Member States specifically support infrastructures investment on water for instance. Thus, the Commission encouraged more regional targeting. The Commission put 19 measures on the table and Member States should only use the targeted ones depending on their territories.

The Commission recognised that this does not help if Member States limit the number of partners with whom they interact in the elaboration and implementation of the programmes.

The harmonisation of the ESIF has only partly been achieved in respect of a certain number of rules. The rules on financing, controls, evaluation and monitoring remain different and further harmonisation is possible. This High-level group had discussed the question of having one fund approach but had judged that with different objectives, they should not encourage the creation of one single fund at any cost. There is an understanding that all the rules cannot be the same.

The Commission explained that there is always a complete overview of the legislation by the EU institutions but all the rules do not need to change every time when they worked well.

Regarding the national checks, Member States should operate with their own systems and would need to fulfil minimum requirements to ensure to the Commission that they have the capacity to apply the controls. But the Commission will not look into details of how these controls would be implemented. The Member States will have to base their controls on a risk assessment analysis.

The Commission reassured the members that the side of the beneficiaries was looked into in detail, to ease the situation of the beneficiaries. Ideally, a one-stop approach should be implemented. In any case, work has to be done at all levels. Simplification of the Member States' systems, simplification of the national and regional rules and easier implementation of the simplified cost options would simplify beneficiaries' life.

The Commission reminded the members that taxation is not a competence of the EU and it is the decision of Member States whether or not to tax grants received.

Questions from the members of the CDG

COPA asked how these recommendations will be endorsed by the Commission and member states and if some of the recommendations could be integrated in the current programming period as it receives feedback from farmers about the complexity of the areas-related payments.

ECVC explained that support should reach young farmers and small farms. Too often, good measures at the beginning were made too complex to be implemented and thus, the burden is too heavy for the farmer. Thus, ECVC encouraged the Commission to take into account the specificities in the different countries.

Another representative of COPA explained that in the checks to be done up to 5 years after the implementation, some minor discrepancies can result in significant penalties. Thus, COPA encouraged the Commission to see where it would be important for farmers to have more flexibility to make meaningful changes in the simplification process.

WWF agreed on the importance of having tools adapted at regional level and offering some flexibility. But policies have also to deliver. So the flexible mechanisms cannot weaken the goals of the policy. The need to maintain a good degree of ambition should be recognised in the ex-ante conditionality as it was the case for the water framework directive for instance.

RED reminded participants about the importance of equity between citizens, no matter where they live. It asked about the possibility of having private funds to co-finance

actions for rural development. The question of rural proofing should also be raised in order to have clear governance structures.

COGECA suggested that the language to use should be simplified too to avoid errors in the interpretation of the rules, especially as farmers have difficulties in understanding the rules.

BirdLife also recognised that the procedures are too complex but warned about the need to maintain the possibility to check at EU level, especially when the national systems are not satisfactory enough.

Answers from the Commission

The Commission reminded the participants that the report was just presented in June during the Cohesion Forum, thus the way it will be taken up is not finalised yet, but it should be defined by the end of the year.

The Commission recognised the need for more subsidiarity and to keep a balance between the available instruments and some guidance to achieve certain objectives. There is no need to have detailed measures but there will still have to be negotiation with Member States to ensure that what the Member State suggests is reasonable and can achieve what is needed to reach the common goals.

Regarding the controls, Member States are the ones judging if beneficiaries have respected the rules or not and have to decide what is a proportionate control. Technologies can help to facilitate the controls: mobile alerts and satellites are tools that could ease the controls.

The Commission recalled that more flexibility does not mean that the Commission will sell things out: in the end, results have to be achieved and the Commission has to justify based on facts and figures how the Member States have identified their targets and how they want to achieve them.

The question of private funding was discussed for this programming period and rejected for control purposes, but this does not mean that it should not be looked at in the future.

The Commission agreed on the complexity of the language used, but Member States could develop brochures and detailed explanations to facilitate its understanding by beneficiaries. A lot of Member States do not use enough support from the advisory services on this matter.

To conclude the Chairman recalled the need to keep the beneficiary at the heart of the reflection and of the simplification of the system.

Digitalization: Smart Villages and Smart Agriculture:

➤ Presentation of the EU Action Plan on Smart Villages

The Commission gave a presentation that is available on CIRCABC.

The Commission presented this new concept of Smart Villages, presented also in the Cork Declaration and in the Action Plan of Cork. It aims to achieve synergies between different operations to add in future rural development strategies. It builds on the current tools already applicable, without additional funding.

The idea is to give opportunities for villages, to introduce digital technologies for rural businesses with a view to supporting entrepreneurship and enhancing quality of life.

A thematic working group of ENRD will be launched on the 26th October, a pilot project on smart eco-social villages is under way and the contractor will be announced in the coming months and the theme will be discussed in the coming Agri-Innovation Summit in Lisbon.

➤ **Digital innovation hubs (outcome EIP-AGRI seminar Kilkenny)**

EIP-AGRI gave a presentation that is available on CIRCABC.

EIP-AGRI presented the digital innovation hubs (DIH) as a way to create an 'innovation ecosystem' and take full advantage of digital advances in the farming sector.

During this seminar in Kilkenny, participants identified needs and barriers to develop digital innovation hubs and defined the main priority steps to facilitate their implementation.

Questions from the members of the CDG

CELCAA recommended that the Commission should adopt an ethical code now and not once many difficulties would have appeared with the use of data. It mentioned a study done between animal and vegetal proteins as an example of misuse of data.

IFOAM welcomed this Smart Village concept of but wondered if this concept should be for all rural areas or only for the most disadvantaged ones which need more support for digitalisation. It would also welcome a larger concept than smart villages, such as smart valleys or smart mountains to have a wider approach.

PAN Europe stated that if quality of life in rural areas should be improved it should first be done by banning the use of pesticides in rural areas.

COPA asked about the concrete implementation of the measure, especially for small farms which do not have the capacity to have the support of an external consultant.

Another representative of COPA underlined the crucial importance of digitalisation for rural areas to enable them to welcome companies and not just be nice places to spend holidays.

CEETAR underlined the importance for rural areas to have qualified workers. Only 60% of France is totally covered by mobile phone access. This is a good example that shows that there is still a long way to go. There is the need for farmers to have access to these new tools, not directly by themselves (due to their costs) but sometimes through intermediaries that can loan these tools to different farmers.

RED offered the results of the work it has done on SMART rural areas in the cross-border area of the Greater Region.

Answers from the Commission

EIP-AGRI confirmed that the question of data sharing was one of the core points of the digital market strategy, even if concrete proposals have not yet been made.

The Commission confirmed that Smart Villages should definitely cover disadvantaged areas and that an entire community should be covered, not just a village in the strict sense.

The Commission explained that there are some good examples of communities who have mobilised themselves to develop fibre connectivity that could better attract companies. The challenge is more difficult when there are not a lot of people in the area. The ENRD will soon publish brochure for the support of smart rural businesses.

The Chairman concluded this session by recalling that developing a whole ecosystem is important, to bring the different actors to work together.

Info point: Areas with Natural Constraints (ANC): state of the art of the implementation in the Member States – Validation of methods

The Commission gave a presentation that is available on CIRCABC.

The Commission recalled the participants that for areas facing natural constraints, a new delimitation has to be implemented in three steps: screening and applying relevant biophysical criteria, then identifying and applying fine-tune indicators and finally establishing a payment scheme. The Commission detailed the three steps with the maximum thresholds allowed for the payments, including for the phasing out areas.

So far, only a few Member States or regions have introduced and approved their programmes with this new delimitation (14). For 37 regions, the process is on-going. The Commission presented Saxony (Germany) and Latvia as two examples finalised.

Questions from the members of the CDG

CELCAA considered that this was an instrument of great interest. It is involved in a project on products' environmental footprint to take into account the environmental performance of a long list of products. It showed the difficulty of assessing environmental performance in Europe. It found it interesting whether these instruments could be used also to assess environmental performance.

COPA asked for a clarification related to the Saxony example and its original area under less favourable areas (LFA) scheme before the new delimitation was implemented.

BirdLife asked the Commission to provide the updated version of the presentation and asked about the new deadline for the Member States to submit their new delimitation – as it was suggested in the Omnibus regulation. In case of conflicts between the delimitation of a Natura 2000 area and an area with specific constraints, it asked which delimitation should overrule the other.

Answers from the Commission

The purpose of ANC is to avoid abandonment of land, which is of course very important for the environment, but there might still be very different production methods and there should not be direct implications on the environmental footprint.

The Commission did not recall the percentage of LFA before the new delimitation and will check it. (Note by DG AGRI: the LFA area before the new delimitation amounted to 353.085 ha (38,7 % of UAA).

The Commission confirmed that the updated presentation will be provided.

So far, the delimitation has to be submitted by the end of 2018. The Omnibus regulation suggested indeed having an extended deadline (2019), but as long as this regulation is not adopted, the Commission encouraged Member States to stick to the initial deadline to remain on the safe side and to be ready on time.

Member States have some room of manoeuvre in the choice of the indicators for the designation of areas affected by specific constraints. For this designation, it has to be proven that land management is necessary to maintain or improve the environment or the country side, to preserve the tourist potential or to protect the coastline in order to be able to have some ANC support. Natura 2000 designation is therefore to be linked to the necessity of the former mentioned land management. So the right indicators have to be chosen.

The Chairman concluded by referring to the difficulties encountered by some Member States in finalising the new delimitation, which certainly explain the reason why an extension of deadline has been requested in the Omnibus regulation.

Info: ENRD / EIP-AGRI activities (Agri-Innovation Summit)

- ENRD gave a presentation that is available on CIRCABC.

ENRD presented the recent activities undertaken in 2017 and recalled the priorities for the year. A planned calendar with the forthcoming activities is available for all participants. In particular, ENRD highlighted that the next Steering Group will be on 23rd October (and the next one in May 2018) and the General Assembly on the 14th December.

Questions from the members

ELARD asked ENRD about the work to do with LEADER group and its chance of survival in the long term.

COPA asked for more details about the meeting in Cyprus on social support systems and asked if the purpose of the coming Steering Group would be to prepare the agenda of the next General Assembly. It would particularly welcome having a targeted discussion during this event.

Answers

The Commission explained that LEADER is generally appreciated so there is a high chance that this will stay in the future CAP. But the correct performance indicators should be established to monitor the policy and not the opposite (the policy should not follow the indicators).

ENRD detailed that the meeting in Cyprus will focus on social inclusion and simplification and confirmed that the next meeting of the Steering Group will indeed prepare the Assembly and will focus also on the results of the CAP consultation and communication assuming the text is published.

- EIP-AGRI gave a presentation that is available on CIRCABC.

EIP-AGRI explained the main priorities for 2017 and the activities undertaken during the year. It focused especially on the coming Agri Innovation Summit that will be organised in Lisbon in October. The Summit is to promote cross-fertilization between RDP and H2020, to share and disseminate experiences on multi-actor innovation activities, to foster networking and collaboration between stakeholders, to raise awareness about

digitalisation opportunities for agriculture and rural economies, and to provide input for innovation policies for agriculture and rural areas.

COPA asked for more details about how the climate change priority has been addressed in 2017 and will be in 2018.

EIP-AGRI explained that this priority is mainly being addressed through some focus groups. The 2018 priorities have started to be developed, notably by the Subgroup on Innovation and they will be further discussed at the next meeting on the 13th October, so more details will be available later on.

Info: synergies between rural development policy and Bioeconomy strategy of the Commission

The Commission gave a presentation that is available on CIRCABC.

The Commission introduced the concept of bioeconomy and the sectors than can contribute to it. It then presented the interactions between the CAP and the bioeconomy strategy. Both the first pillar and measures from the second pillar can support bioeconomy development in the CAP.

The Commission also gave some concrete examples on how to use these measures to develop bioeconomy.

The bioeconomy strategy is currently under review and a public consultation will be launched in November 2017. A conference on bioeconomy will be organised on 14-16 November 2017.

Questions from the members

CEETAR underlined the key role played by forestry in the bioeconomy sector and encouraged the Commission to better organise together the different activities.

EUROPABio stated that bioeconomy is an important subject as this is by definition a rural economy. Each region can use this concept and adapt it to its strengths.

For RED, bioeconomy is at the heart of territorial issues.

EURAF explained that reflexions on agroforestry and mix-regimes of production should be introduced. Forests present a lot of advantages to address climate change mitigation and to maintain biodiversity.

CELCAA underlined the role of livestock and the need to use all sub-products derived from animals in the bioeconomy.

BirdLife emphasised that for the renewable energy aspects, some barriers have to be put to ensure the respect of sustainability. Currently in the renewable energy directive, there are some weak criteria on some products but not on others. It would be important to correct this.

COPA explained that bioeconomy brings a lot of opportunities for farmers and can bring additional incomes. It would like better recognition of the role of farmers in the bioeconomy strategy. This strategy should be revised, and not only reviewed to unlock the potential that agriculture and forestry sector can offer. This is important to maintain investments in this sector, and support the use of more innovative products. It regretted

that some strong environmental requirements requested for agricultural activities are not the same for fossil-based products.

Answers from the Commission

The Commission explained that sustainability aspects are taken into account in several policy frameworks, such as the CAP, and biodiversity being one of them, as well as the food and no food debate. It recognised the role of forestry in the bioeconomy sector.

H2020 programme, the operational groups and cooperation measures can offer interesting possibilities to implement pilot cases at local levels.

Suggestions of items for the next Civil Dialogue Group

Next CDG meeting will be on 12th December so just after the political Communication, if this is not further delayed.

Members of the CDG were invited to do make suggestions for this next agenda:

EEB supported the idea of having contributions coming from the different members and wondered if the suggestion of WWF on result-based approach could be taken into account for another meeting.

COPA agreed on the result-based schemes explaining that there are different pilot studies done and it would be great to hear about the pros/cons. It also suggested focusing on young farmers knowing that there is a report published by the court of auditors addressing pillar I and II. It would encourage a state of play on the implementation of that measure in the different Member States with qualitative and quantitative data.

BirdLife would welcome a presentation of the Omnibus regulation and on the Communication of the Commission.

CELCAA would like to have some discussions on the marketing standards for meat-products.

The Chairman responded that the CDG on Rural Development might not be the best place for this last proposal, but he would try to forward the proposal to other relevant groups.

The Commission explained that there are no interim results in the Omnibus trilogue process, so nothing to be shared in this meeting, but it should be feasible to have something for the next meeting. The Communication being expected by the end of November should be in the right timing to be on the agenda.

On the state-of-play of result-based schemes, it was not possible to have some updates for the September meeting, but for December, it should be possible to have a look at the achievement of milestones.

In addition, the Commission suggested to present the report it made on the compilation of the bottleneck issues.

The Chairman thanked all participants for the constructive dialogue during the whole day and welcomed the proposals. He encouraged the Commission to re-examine the question of the Vice-Chair election for the next meeting

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

Mr Dominique Fayel from Euromontana was elected as Chair and Ms Trees Robijns from BirdLife was elected as Vice-Chair.

The election as Vice-Chair of Mr Peter Pascher was rejected due to the delay in his application, but the Commission will see if another election for this free seat would be possible during the next meeting.

New rules apply for the CDG, notably reducing the time limit for submission of the minutes and for the reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs for the experts.

5. Next steps

The publication of the Communication on the future CAP is expected before the end of November.

Trilogue discussion on the Omnibus should be finalised in October for an agreement on the regulation before the end of the year.

The ENRD Steering Group meeting is planned for 23rd October 2017 in Brussels.

The Assembly of Rural Networks is planned for 14th December 2017 in Brussels.

Suggestions for the agenda of the CDG on Rural Development on 12 December 2017:

- **Election of the second Vice-Chair**
- **Presentation and discussion about the Communication of DG Agri**
- **Presentation and discussion about the Omnibus regulation**
- **Young farmers: state-of-play of the implementation of the measures supporting farmers and examples on how these measures could have effectively worked**
- **Result-based approach: state-of the play, study on bottlenecks and case study**
- **Suggestions of items by the members**
- **AOB**

6. Next meeting

The next meeting of the CDG for Rural Development is planned for 12th December 2017.

7. List of participants - Annex

Disclaimer

"The opinions expressed in this report represent the point of view of the meeting participants from agriculturally related NGOs at community level. These opinions cannot, under any circumstances, be attributed to the European Commission. Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on behalf of the Commission is responsible for the use which might be made of the here above information."

List of participants– Minutes

Civil Dialogue Group RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Date: 19/09/2017

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ANDERSSON Johanna	COGECA
ATS Kerli	COGECA
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BIRKE LUND Kirsten	ELARD
BJORNSSON Sofia	COGECA
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CHAUVET Jean-Marie	EuropaBio
CHRISTENSEN Henriette	PAN Europe
CRIADO MONLEON Alejandro Javier	EEB / BEE
D AMARIO Angelantonio	CELCAA
DELORME Hubert	UEAPME
DRESIN Eric	CEETTAR
DRYGAS Mirosław	COGECA
DZELZKALEJA-BURMISTRE Maira	COPA
EHRlich Klaus	EUROGITES
EMBACHER Hans	COPA
FAYEL Dominique	EUROMONTANA
FENIX Tomas Ignac	CEJA
GERGELY Marta	COGECA
GONO Adam	FurEurope
GUNNING Gerry	COPA
HELLICAR Martin	BirdLife Europe
JAUMOTTE Isabelle	COPA
KOEHLER Eugene	COPA
LEPORATI Stefano	COPA
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MEREDITH Stephen	IFOAM EU GROUP
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PELTRE Gerard	RED
PIRRONE Maria	CEJA
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