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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Directorate A – Strategy & Policy analysis  
The Director

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## MINUTES

### JOINT MEETING OF THE CIVIL DIALOGUE GROUP ON ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE AND ON THE CAP STRATEGIC PLANS AND HORIZONTAL MATTERS

on 11 June 2024

Chair: AGRI A.1, AGRI B.2

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

The chairperson welcomed the members of the Civil Dialogue Group (CDG) to the second joint meeting of the CDG on Environment and Climate Change and on CAP Strategic Plans and Horizontal Matters. The minutes of the previous meetings were approved without any comments. The chairperson presented the agenda of the meeting, which was approved by the group, without raising new AOB points.

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

Non-public.

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

##### **Point 1 on CAP State of Play and outlook towards next mandate**

DG AGRI's Director-General, delivered an insightful speech on the current state of the CAP and the future of agriculture, providing his views around the four questions that are being covered by the strategic dialogue. He emphasized the importance of a fair standard of living for farmers, sustainable agricultural practices within planetary boundaries, leveraging innovation and research, and enhancing the competitiveness of Europe's food systems. The Director-General concluded by thanking stakeholders for their commitment.

During the Q&A session, stakeholders expressed their appreciation for the Director-General's comprehensive speech. The discussion focused on the urgent need for

strategic support in transitioning towards sustainable agriculture, with a focus on the following key areas:

CEJA highlighted the necessity for a holistic agricultural system, underscoring the importance of a robust value chain, effective crisis management, climate transition funding, and a social and territorial approach to agriculture.

COGECA recognized the EU's leadership in eco-friendly farming and advocated for a CAP that supports diverse agricultural practices and employment across all regions, ensuring a green transition that includes both small and large farms, as well as organic and traditional farming methods.

Regarding evidence-based policy, CELCAA stressed the need for evidence-based strategies to adapt to structural changes in food trade, citing FAO reports on climate-induced shifts in crop patterns. IFOAM raised concerns about the current methodologies used for measuring sustainability in organic farming and called for a more inclusive approach that covers all farmers. COPA emphasized the significance of a comprehensive methodology that accounts for biodiversity, income, environmental, and social factors in sustainability assessments.

EFNCP addressed the simplification of the CAP, advocating for continued support for essential farming practices and the link between public funding and the delivery of public goods.

COPA highlighted the troubling decline in farming numbers and the urgent need for initiatives to attract young farmers. EUROMONTANA welcomed the new CAP delivery model but called for mandatory measures to support mountain farmers given their specific needs. RED and AREPO underlined the significance of supporting pastoralism and family farms, which play a crucial role in maintaining vibrant rural communities. AREPO raised concerns about extensive livestock farming and its sustainability.

In terms of the social dimension, EFFAT stressed the importance of improving employment conditions for the sector's 10 million workers to ensure the long-term resilience of the farming sector. VIA CAMPESINA stressed the importance of stable prices, efficient use of public funds for climate adaptation, and a global vision that recognizes farmers' contributions to ecosystem services. They called for a CAP that better acknowledges efforts in carbon sequestration and supports farmers in protecting biodiversity.

COGECA presented cooperatives as a solution to the sector's challenges, emphasizing their role in providing advice, fostering innovation, and ensuring fair income distribution within the food chain. They advocated for sectoral approaches that support the cooperative model. EUFRAS voiced concerns about the income disparity among farmers and the societal undervaluation of food products.

Finally, a maize producer's representative raised the issue of reciprocity in trade agreements, stressing the need for mirror clauses that ensure imported products meet the same production standards as those required of EU farmers.

## **Point 2 on simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**

The Commission's representative (DG AGRI B.2) presented the simplification measures adopted by the Commission and co-legislators, which came into effect on 25

May 2024. These measures aim to alleviate the agricultural sector crisis and include amendments to the CAP strategic plan regulation and the horizontal regulation. Key points covered derogations for GAECs, targeted exemptions, and greater flexibility for member states in defining soil coverage requirements. A detailed presentation was made available through CIRCABC.

Stakeholders acknowledged the Commission's swift action in adopting the CAP adaptation proposals and engaged in a detailed discussion on the practical application and diverse perspectives on the implications of these simplification measures:

EURAF inquired about the ongoing definition and preservation of landscape features under GAEC 8 and sought information on the publication timelines for mandatory eco-schemes.

ECVC welcomed the simplification measures for small farmers but expressed reservations about the modification of GAEC 8. They raised concerns about the potential lack of eco-scheme payments for environmental infrastructure in France and called for stronger market regulation, social policies, and effective resource use, underscoring the significant economic contribution of Italy's small farms.

COPA welcomed the simplification package, emphasizing the need for clear national implementation and looking forward to the Commission's forthcoming studies on simplification. They raised concerns about delayed 2023 payments, the administrative load on payment offices, and the complexity of the new CAP program. COPA stressed the importance of a level playing field for EU trade and advocated for enhanced collaboration to prevent farmer disadvantages due to payment delays.

COGECA asked for clarification on whether there will still be controls and penalties for the SMR for small farms under 10 hectares.

IFOAM expressed disappointment that the measures did not offer incentives for farmers practicing sustainable agriculture and queried the possibility of exemptions for third-party certified practices like organic farming.

AREFLH and GEOPA addressed the recent floods' impact on planting activities, with AREFLH calling for clarifications on how member states should adapt their CAP plans in response to these extreme climate events. GEOPA echoed the concerns about the late flexibility, which meant most farmers could not utilize it this year. They emphasized the need for legal security and precision regarding GAEC 7 and the eco-schemes related to GAEC 8. There was a call for clear guidance on the timing and application of these measures to ensure farmers can utilize the flexibility offered.

CELCAA asked for a timeline regarding the second package of measures, including CMO Regulation amendments and the UTP Directive revision.

### **Point 3 Presentation on European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR):**

The afternoon session commenced with a presentation by the representative of AGRI B.2, who provided an overview and the latest status of the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), set to be implemented from the start of 2025. Following the presentation, participants shared their comments and concerns:

COGECA (Dk, Chair Agri Food Council) emphasized that the timeline is too short for traders and operators to implement the EUDR and called for a postponement. They noted delays in guidance, benchmarking, and IT support, with IT requiring sufficient adaptation time for operators to create interfaces. They also mentioned that several

Member States have yet to appoint competent authorities, leading to market disruption. They also highlighted concern for soyabean farmers, as no contracts for soya deliveries for the next year are currently available due to uncertainties.

COGECA (Finland, Forest) added that the regulation is inadequate for their sector, highlighting that roundwood is typically sold two years ahead of harvest, making implementation challenging. They shared Finland's over 100,000 annual roundwood sales and expressed doubt that the IT system could manage this volume, advocating for postponement and the introduction of a different regulation by the Commission.

Food & Drinks Europe expressed their commitment to supporting the successful implementation of the EUDR but pointed out that transitional arrangements are unclear and urgently need guidance on FAQs, and an open information system, suggesting a postponement.

The COPA (DE Representative) described the implementation unrealistic without added value for EU products and called for postponement and revision, along with the creation of a “Zero-risk country category” to generally exempt operators from DDS requirements.

COPA (AT Representative) questioned the positive effect of the EUDR on a global level, requesting the Commission to assess and quantify its impact on global deforestation. They stressed the importance of forest protection but sought clarity on any evaluation outcomes.

COGECA (ESP Representative) highlighted the significance of soya as feed for the Spanish livestock (pig) sector, with 10 million tons imported annually, estimating that EUDR administrative costs will amount to 20 cents per kilogram of cattle, and called for postponement of the regulation's entry into force.

AREFLH (Food & Vegetables) pointed out that soya sellers are not ready, causing contract issues for 2025 due to a lack of clarity and guidance, and predicted a 20% price increase for certain commodities, particularly some PDO Italian cheeses.

CEETTAR (Forestry) expressed concerns about the regulation complicating efforts to protect forests in other countries and questioned whether industry and consumers are prepared to pay more, advocating for postponement and review of the regulation with input from those working in the forestry sector.

#### **Point 4 on CAP Farm Sustainability Tool (FaST)**

The Commission provided an overview of the state-of-play as regards the FaST for nutrients. In consideration of the requirements laid down in Regulation (EU) 2021/2115, it recalled its support in the design and creation of the EU FaST software application and its subsequent pilot implementation by 5 Member States / 4 Paying Agents. The application is publicly available on the EU FaST Platform <sup>(1)</sup> in an open-source code format enabling customisation and is further supplemented by the FaST

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(<sup>1</sup>) <https://fastplatform.eu/>

Navigator Tool <sup>(2)</sup>, an online web-based tool offering fertilisation advice based on field information.

Considering this input, while exploring options for further software enhancements, the Commission made available a questionnaire to Member States aiming to assess their needs for further technical support. Most of the reporting Member States do not need further technical input, rather requested the Commission to provide support for networking, knowledge sharing and dissemination of best practices. To this end, the Commission has set up a list of national contact points for FaST, organised an online meeting on 6 March 2024 and will continue with further dissemination activities.

Participants then shared their feedback and exchanged the following views:

COPA acknowledged that the tool is clear and appropriate for farmers, but expressed concerns about the potential additional administrative burdens. They emphasized the importance of involving farmers in its design and practical implementation to enhance its effectiveness and offered their support.

EURAF was pleased with the tool, highlighting its scientific benefits and potential to connect carbon and (Greenhouse Gas) GHG emissions data with other tools. They supported further use of the land parcel identification system and stressed the value of data from previous carbon-sensitive measures. EURAF also inquired about the response rate from Member States and how compliance can be ensured to make the tool available to all.

EFCNP congratulated the European Commission (EC) for making it an open-source tool, thus allowing for further customization.

COGECA (Online) expressed concern that the tool might be too advanced for some farmers and outdated for those already using nutrient-related tools.

EFNCP (Online) congratulated the EC for their efforts and noted that farmers need training and advice to handle the tool effectively. They inquired about contact points for national projects and research particularly in Spain.

EUFRAS identified trust as a major challenge, emphasizing the need to build trust in the data used by these tools. They called for EU efforts to address this issue.

### **Point 5 on climate adaptation**

The Commission's representative, DG CLIMA E1, presented the Commission European Climate Risk Assessment Report (EUCRA) and the Commission Communication "Managing Climate Risks – Protecting people and prosperity. These two distinct products conclude with the same message, that climate hazards will increase under all scenarios and that vulnerability/exposure depend on our choices. Then, the key horizontal actions and the examples of key risks to be addressed in the agricultural sector were presented

COPA said that the activation of anti-hail defence systems with the use of rockets is requested by farmers even though it is not considered as effective and asked if there are

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<sup>(2)</sup> <https://tool.fastnavigator.eu/>

other means for the protection of farmers and that the R&D should offer best solution for the protection against the climate risks. Then, COPA said that ways to improve advisory services, like for example to train advisors to bring knowledge to other advisors. Then, COPA said that neither the private nor the public advisory services were ready because they did not have time to prepare and equip themselves. In HR for example, there is one advisor for 500 farmers. Another COPA representative said that the ruminants are the main source of methane, but the cattle is still the cleanest meat due to the way it digests feed. Then, coming back to the deforestation, asked if pellets made of wood are seen as a risk for forestry and why they are promoted. He concluded emphasising the importance of generational renewal but questioning if the pension schemes are attractive to young farmers, since farmers do not receive a fair pension.

COGECA asked to develop resistant crops and varieties, based on the new techniques.

RED stressed the fact that the climate change affects the forests, the agriculture and the rural areas and that bodies and citizens should stand together.

ECVC said that the main animal feed, corn and soya, are in danger due to climate risks. Corn is very sensitive to droughts while the price of soya is increased. So, more sustainable and resilient systems, such as grass-based systems, without necessarily the use of digital tools, are needed. He concluded that the  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the farmers in France do not access neither the eco-schemes nor the AECC and that the CAP does not give a proper support to resistant agriculture and the development of risk management tools.

AREFLH emphasized that the climate risks come fast and that we are late in combating them and that we need more resilient systems. He added that sometimes adaptation is easy, but not always and that not all the areas and not all the crops have problems with water and other climate risks and that we need to find a solution for these risks, e.g to manage water.

CEJA said that there is an urgent need for adaptation and that we must move forward with the use of knowledge, technology, innovation, combination of private and public investments, risk management and private insurance schemes. He asked what will happen if crops are not insured, due to climate risks.

VIA CAMPESINA emphasised that policy should take people into account and the importance of coherence, repeating that risks work well together but policies not necessarily, giving the example of the recent GAEC amendments that did not consider the climate risks. We cannot go backwards but towards climate mitigation with mid- and long-term measures, agriculture can give a positive example and that the Green Deal targets are still needed as well as the sustainable food law. A precondition is that the market should be first regulated since the budget is limited. The farmers should receive a fair income by selling their products and dedicate the additional resources to transform agriculture. Finally, he stressed that easy promises and solutions via the new techniques and new resilient varieties should be avoided. On the contrary, a holistic approach should be adopted.

## **Point 6 on GHG emissions study**

Following a brief introduction by The Commission's representative AGRI.B3, the CAP evaluation Helpdesk presented the preliminary objective and scope, the methodological approach, the main results as well as the concluding remarks of the study. Finally, some ideas about the future steps were given

COPA highlighted the difficulty to assess the performance of the CSP, the importance of studies and evidence-based data, to have a close look at the CSPs and the CHG emissions as well as their link between, and to have best practices to have a better performance. EU has a 6 % of the global CHG emissions and only a part of it is due to agricultural activities. We can lower the emissions, based on best practices, but it should be clear that we cannot have agriculture without emissions. It'd be good to know what the other sectors and the other parts of the world do. For example, in EU we decrease the meat consumption, but in Eastern Asia is increased. Is the EU effort worth it? The global trend is missing. This effort should be coordinated with carbon removals. COGECA indicated that the manure management will be beneficial for the CHG emissions.

#### **Point 7 on AOB**

No AOB were raised. DG AGRI informed that the updated table on the uptake of measures under the old rural development programmes 2014- 2022 is available on CIRCABC.

#### **4. Next meeting**

The next meetings are indicatively planned on 7 November 2024 for the CDG on CAP Strategic Plans and Horizontal Matters and on 21 October 2024 for the CDG on Environment and Climate Change.

#### **5. List of participants**

Organizations that were present (see the enclosed list)

List of participants

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CIVIL DIALOGUE GROUP ON ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE  
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*on 11 June 2024*

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



EUFRAS - EUROPEAN FORUM FOR AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL ADVISORY SERVICES
ELO - EUROPEAN LANDOWNER'S ORGANISATION
ERCA - EUROPEAN RURAL COMMUNITY ALLIANCE
EURAF - EUROPEAN AGROFORESTRY FEDERATION
EUROMONTANA
FEFAC - EUROPEAN FEED MANUFACTURERS FEDERATION / FÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE DES FABRICANTS D'ALIMENTS COMPOSÉS
FESASS - FÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE POUR LA SANTÉ ANIMALE ET LA SÉCURITÉ SANITAIRE
FOODDRINKEUROPE
GEOPA-COPA
IBMA - INTERNATIONAL BIOCONTROL MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION
IFOAM - INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS EUROPEAN REGIONAL GROUP
ORIGINEU - ORGANISATION POUR UN RÉSEAU INTERNATIONAL D'INDICATIONS GÉOGRAPHIQUES
PFP - PRIMARY FOOD PROCESSORS
RURAL TOUR - EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF RURAL TOURISM
RURALITY, ENVIRONMENT, DEVELOPMENT
SLOW FOOD
<b><u>AD HOC EXPERT</u></b>
LAURA NOCENTINI: EU CAP NETWORK