

Brussels, 21/09/2018

Save number: [agri.ddg3.i.4\(2018\)5447597](#)

MINUTES

Meeting of the Civil Dialogue Group Forestry and Cork

Date: 01/06/2018

Chair: Mr **Lennart Ackzel (COGECA)**

All organisations were present except EFFAT and UEF.

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

The Chair asked the members to approve the minutes of the previous meeting and the agenda. The minutes were approved. The agenda was approved without the point on green infrastructure that was taken out due to unavailability of the expert.

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was non-public.

3. List of points discussed

3.1. Presentation and exchange of views on the Evaluation of the Forestry Measures under Rural Development Programmes

The organisation that conducted the study, Alliance Environment, gave a presentation that is available on CIRCABC.

Questions

CEPF asked whether the study made the link with the EU Bioeconomy Strategy. In the presentation, only the biodiversity strategy was mentioned.

In addition, **CEPF** commented on the fact that the sector was facing many challenges such as storms and fires. While the sector had successfully overcome them, more needed to be done. The important role of the ANC measure was mentioned and its link with Article 174 of the EU Treaty.

EURAF mentioned that they had conducted a study comparing different measures under the CAP. They questioned why MS had not included agroforestry in their programmes. They underlined that agroforestry was also a long-term measure and needed to be treated in the same way as other measures.

¹ If not adopted by written procedure (CIRCABC)

They also stated that the FAO had recognised agroforestry and its benefits in terms of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Agroforestry needed to be included in the accounting rules.

Copa stressed that some of the conclusions of the study were very important such as the fact that the forest cycle needed to be taken into account.

It was also mentioned that it took much longer to see results and that it was difficult to evaluate the impact in the short term. In addition, regarding funds and support for biodiversity, there were other tools available at national level besides RD funds.

Cogeca mentioned that the results focused too much on one aspect – forestry was not only about biodiversity. In addition, many issues needed to be addressed. Forests were facing a great deal of challenges which were having an impact on biodiversity.

EEB asked how the Commission planned to use the MAES results and to translate them into actions and recommendations for the future CAP.

EUSTAFOR stressed that the report was well-timed. They asked whether a comparison between different ownership rights had been made. In slide 10, prevention and restoration had been mentioned, which were very important for public forest owners in terms of adaptation. Commenting on slide 12 on N2000, EUSTAFOR asked what kind assessment had been used.

EOS stressed that the role of industry was completely neglected.

Answers

Measures under RD did not concern industry given a share line with EFRD to which industry are eligible. Regarding the figures on the graphs on slide 13, the expert could not provide an answer as they came from an EEA study.

Adaptation was an important aspect as far as prevention and restoration were concerned. This was observed and is presented in the conclusions of the study even if it was not presented in the Steering. The expert explained that MS were using varieties better adapted to climate change (forest barriers). The different types of property had not been analysed.

The analysis of the support of the RD measures to forests' multi-functionality was also an important request from the Commission and was not an easy issue. The study had, however, tried to look into it. Indeed, there was a great diversity of operations that could be financed, contributing to support multi-functionality.

Regarding N2000, an important limit for the study was the lack of detailed monitoring data on N2000 was very difficult, in particular in terms of distinguishing what was done in forestry and in other areas.

Agroforestry required a lot of work and not a lot of discussion had taken place between relevant stakeholders and the authorities on this measure.

The contribution to the EU Bioeconomy Strategy was in the scope of the study but was something that needed to be better addressed in the future. The ongoing study (EFI) on the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy may better answer to these questions.

Regarding the question on MAES, the Commission mentioned that in RD they took into account different sources of information including MAES.

Questions

Copa asked about non-productive investments.

Via Campesina asked why the Nordic countries were not included in the prevention and restoration measure.

The **Chair** answered that this measure was not a priority in these countries and that forest managers were able to manage these kinds of challenges.

SE and FI governments were maybe more focused on agriculture

Via Campesina said that the wrong aspects had been focused on and that industrialisation could not continue. The multi-functional role of forests needed to be the focus. Significant cuts were not acceptable.

Copa also stated that there was a connection between the national state aid system and RD.

ELO stated that the diversity of forests was the basis for the uptake of these measures.

Administration was an issue – there was too much red tape.

Answers

Compared with other measures, the uptake of the measure on non-productive investments was quite good. It was important to take into account the fact that the RD budget was limited.

The evaluation should provide inspiration for all on how specific measures could be used.

3.2. Exchange of views on the mid-term review of the EU Forest Strategy

A presentation that is published on CIRCABC was given by EFI, which was conducting a study entitled: “Study on Progress in Implementing the EU Forest Strategy”.

They explained the state of play of the study and the context. As soon as the results were available, the Commission would prepare a draft Commission report on the review of the EU Forest Strategy.

The study would also present some ideas on the future, including possible priorities for 2018-2020 and other ideas on the Multi-Annual implementation Plan (MAP) and whether it was still fit for purpose.

Consequently, the Commission would present a Commission report on the review of the EU Forest Strategy to the EP and Council. The Commission report should be ready by December 2018, followed by discussions with the EP and the Council.

The Chairman explained the process for preparing the resolution. He explained that the chairmanship had worked on the resolution but that some NGOs had rejected it mainly because they did not agree with a review of the Forest Strategy.

Questions

EUSTAFOR stressed that this was one of the most important items for the sector. They asked for a clear explanation on why the NGOs rejected the resolution. They mentioned that the CDG had to deliver and that the resolution was the best way of highlighting the important role that the sector could play. Regarding the questionnaire distributed by the contractor, they asked for more time to consult their members in order to deliver something meaningful.

CEPF asked when the study would be published, and supported the request for an extended deadline for the questionnaire. They mentioned that the Paris Agreement, LULUCF and SDGs were new elements that needed to be included in the future.

EURAF pointed out the importance of agroforestry and its inclusion in the strategy. Agroforestry applied both to forest land and agriculture land.

Copa asked what would happen after the review as it considered the update to be essential.

CEPI stressed the same as the other speakers: sufficient time was needed to provide a well-developed answer to the questionnaire and that an update was important.

Via Campesina underlined that they could not agree with the draft resolution and they would provide an explanation in writing.

EEB mentioned that their decision on the resolution was mainly linked to time constraints, and that they had not had enough time to consult their members. In addition, the text did not address environmental issues sufficiently. They underscored that they could not call for an update as they were in the preliminary phase of the review.

EOS asked how the answers to the questionnaire would be analysed.

USSE also mentioned the tight deadline for the questionnaire. They regretted the fact that it had not been possible to reach an agreement on the resolution. They stated that they supported the update as this was essential for future policy development.

Answers

EFI mentioned that external time constraints needed to be taken into account for the questionnaire and that they were looking into extending the deadline.

The study would not be available publicly in September. They mentioned that they would distinguish between quantitative contributions and comments received from various organisations. The views of various stakeholders would be taken into account but they were not the only source of information that would be used.

The **Commission** stated that they were looking into the possibility to extend the deadline. The timing of the publication of the study was subject to different factors.

CEPI underlined that the best asset of the CDG group was that it could reach a common agreement. Indeed, in the past, the CDG was able to do so with several resolutions. This

time, despite the fact that there seemed to be an issue, the CDG should be able to reach an agreement. An update of the EU Forest Strategy should be called for.

Copa pointed to the importance of this CDG and the Standing Forestry Committee in the framework of updating the EU Forest Strategy. The stakeholder bodies had to be involved throughout the process.

The Chair concluded that the message from the group to the contractor was to prolong the deadline of the questionnaire to allow the stakeholders to contribute properly.

3.3. Exchange of views on the guidance document on cascading use of biomass CEPI

A presentation was given by the Commission (DG GROW) that is available on CIRCABC.

Questions

EUSTAFOR underlined that the cascading principle was already widely implemented in the forestry sector. They also said that the cascading guidance document should be used in a non-regulatory way, so as to promote resource efficiency, climate mitigation and adaptation.

CEPF thanked DG GROW for involving the stakeholders in the preparation process of the guidance document. They were satisfied with the scope of the 2016 study. The note published by the Commission was consistent with the scope of the study (e.g. the fact that cascading started at industry level). A remark was made regarding the “forest residues” that were mentioned in the presentation. CEPF hoped that the term did not refer to residues from the forest, which were under SFM, but rather that it related to forest industry residues only.

Copa also thanked DG GROW for its extensive work on this guidance document and hoped that it would lead to better understanding. However, Copa did not understand why the Commission had spent so much time on this natural economic principle. Cascading was something that the forest-based sector already did naturally: high-value wood was used for the right high-value purpose. Cascading use was an economic principle, and thus Copa welcomed a non-binding document providing guidance on it. It emphasised that the document should remain non-binding.

CEJA questioned whether or not the issue would be taken seriously enough in the MS given the non-binding nature of the document. Non-binding enforcement could take varying forms in different MS. CEJA deemed it to be positive that primary production in forests was excluded from the guidance on the cascading use of biomass. Rules trying to control the wood market usually had a negative effect as they created market distortion. The market was already naturally transforming the wood into high-value products. Cascading regulation could create a barrier and block new products from accessing the market. It was important not to forget that new products would play a major role in climate change mitigation.

EURAF said that they had not received an invitation to the workshop on the guidance document on the cascading use of biomass and that this was a shame. They emphasised that a key point in terms of efficiency was light and that light was currently being wasted.

The most effective use of light was achieved with agroforestry systems that captured light best. The results of good light use could be significantly improved. In the bioeconomy concept, there was a plan to include types of land use other than traditional urban/agriculture/forest land use. In agroforestry, forest biomass was used to increase forest fertility. EURAF thought that cascading use should integrate different types of land use such as agroforestry.

CEPF stressed that they would like the Commission to highlight to the Member States and the regional authorities that this guidance document is non-binding. Moreover, instead of waving a “stick” when enforcing a regulation, a “carrot” should be offered in the form of incentives.

EOS stressed that the cascading guidance document should not regulate the way sawmill residues were used. 80% of the residues came from softwood and were not problematic; hardwood residues, however, posed a problem. EOS suggested boosting the use of hardwood residues. Moreover, the sawmill industry was not supported as far as investments in new machinery were concerned. New machines would help to optimise the use of logs and this was the aim; the sawmill industries were aiming to use a larger part of the log rather than produce residues.

EEB highlighted that they were very disappointed with the process for cascading use of woody biomass. There was no guidance on the primary use of biomass. The document should include guidance on how to better use primary production. They regretted that the sustainability part of the guidance document did not cover environmental aspects. The circular economy was about doing more with less, and therefore aimed to decrease production.

Answers:

In response to the comment from EEB, the Commission explained that the efficient use of resources referred to primary and secondary production, without compromising the environment and while using effective technologies. The approach was focused on achieving the environmental objectives of the EU. This took into account all material types.

Concerning the question from EOS, the Commission said that they had looked into the diversity of uses, which could evidently vary considerably. Regarding the issue on hardwood, there was not enough data yet but they were looking for it. Due to the high number of sectors concerned, it was decided that the guidance document would use woody biomass as an explanatory example. The issue of wood mobilisation was excluded from the guidance document as it had been addressed earlier in other Commission work.

The Commission was aware that the market-based mechanisms were not always favourable for innovation, but in Member States with a procurement sector, the uptake of innovation was quicker as well as scaling up for market actions. The Commission recognised the importance of light and of better land use. Light was not a topic the Commission was addressing as they had no control over it. As for land use, it was up to forest owners to decide on forest management. Wooden buildings were increasingly in demand, and given the growing population there would be greater demand for housing. Moreover, wooden buildings allowed for long-term carbon sequestration and therefore had a positive impact in terms of the cascading guidance document.

The Chair concluded that the CDG members would continue the discussion on this topic in the next meetings.

Points for information

3.4. Presentation of AGM (new online meeting organisation and reimbursement system)

The Commission (DG AGRI) gave a presentation that is available on CIRCABC. No questions were asked by the members of the CDG.

3.5. The revision of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy

The Commission (DG RTD) gave a presentation that is available on CIRCABC.

Questions

Copa asked about synergies between the future CAP, the EU Forest Strategy and the EU Bioeconomy Strategy.

CEPF underlined that in the future strategy it was important to strengthen the role of primary producers. Regarding sustainability, existing systems needed to be taken into account and the woodworking industries should have a more prominent role. A clear link between the EU Forest Strategy and the bioeconomy needed to be made.

EUSTAFOR stressed that the eight policy messages published last year were relevant and that we were managing a growing resource. They asked about the consistency and links between the various policies, not only in terms of biomass but also the wide range of ecosystems.

CEI-Bois mentioned that they had a specific paper on support for the bioeconomy and that synergies with the circular economy were crucial. Wood mobilisation was also important.

EEB stressed that environmental impacts needed to be taken into account.

CEPI highlighted that the focus should be on new technologies, resource efficiency and climate change. More should be done with the raw materials. They also stressed that the first movers had higher costs. They asked about the BBI and their role in the development of the strategy.

Via Campesina stated that the bioeconomy was providing good revenue and a business focus. They also mentioned that big industries did not make up the entirety of the bioeconomy.

Answers

The Commission underlined that many of the organisations provided feedback. Connection between various policies was important. The proposal for the future CAP was published and the bioeconomy was a priority.

Regarding the involvement of primary producers, it was not the first time that this issue had been raised. The Commission hoped that this would be part of the final document.

On sustainability, no new legislation would be proposed. In terms of the market, something would be needed on the definition of bio-based products, such as standards.

The Commission also stated that DG ENV was very much involved in the process and that the environmental aspects were present: the word used most frequently in the paper was sustainability.

Regarding the BBI, they considered that they had achieved more than planned. In addition, the BBI was under evaluation.

3.6. Results of the EIP-AGRI Focus Group on Sustainable Mobilisation of Forest Biomass

The chair of this focus group gave a presentation that is available on Agri Info.

Questions

Copa informed the group that last year in May a roundwood market place was opened in Finland. It was available to all and represented 30 % of the market.

CEPF asked about the next steps, how the report would be used, and how DG RTD would take it into account in the revised bioeconomy strategy.

Via Campesina stressed the need to have insight into competition on the raw materials market as multinationals were controlling everything.

CEETTAR asked why nobody in the group represented the contracting entities as they played a key role in motivating foresters to sell wood. They inquired after the findings of the focus group which could be useful in the future. They mentioned that the training system was essential as it was important for good businesses to have skilful operators. In addition, modern and safe technologies were needed to be able to compete with other parts of the world.

ELO were concerned that the focus group was too academic and had no practical impact.

EEB underlined that the environmental aspects were not taken into account. Carbon sequestration in relation to biomass mobilisation was mentioned. This was a very strange approach as it did not represent the whole impact. Operators were in a key position as they were aware of what was happening on the ground. Without sufficient knowledge this would impact biodiversity.

EOS emphasised that wood availability was an important aspect for the whole industry. Market analysis on demand and supply and global aspects needed to be taken into account. The price had increased by almost 25% due to weather conditions.

Copa expressed its thanks for the professional work that had been carried out. It asked how we could move to a less fossil-based economy taking into account the Paris Agreement and the revision of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy. The resources in our forests were important and productivity needed to be boosted.

Answers

The work would start immediately. Only two focus groups linked to forestry had been created in the context of the EIP-AGRI and this had followed a long period of lobbying. This was the most important topic for the sector. In response to the question from EEB, mini-paper no. 6 was dealing with environmental aspects.

The potential to increase biomass availability was of 30-40% but too many factors were affecting this.

The next steps were in the hands of the Commission. A toolbox was needed to overcome the current situation.

There would still be enough raw materials for 2038; the sector had improved significantly and was using a lot of new technologies; cooperation was needed.

The Commission mentioned that the whole idea behind the EIP-AGRI was to encourage the sector to work together more.

The Chairman concluded by saying that efficient producer organisations were needed and that the fragmentation of forest ownership needed to be tackled.

3.7. EU actions against deforestation

The Commission (DG ENV) gave a presentation on this topic which is available on CIRCABC.

EEB called on the Commission to come up with a proposal for an action plan and to make it effective. They mentioned that consumption should be reduced and that rapid solutions needed to be found.

Copa stressed the role of the local population. They added that everything that comes from the forest should be used to support local development.

CEPF said that when addressing the issue of deforestation, primary producers in the EU should not be blamed. It should be made clear that deforestation was occurring outside EU borders. The right balance needed to be found and the words used when discussing deforestation should be put into context.

In addition, CEPF emphasised the importance of ownership rights and support for small-scale forest owners when fighting against deforestation.

Furthermore, CEPF asked about the reference to forest biomass sustainability criteria and wanted to know more about it.

Via Campesina mentioned that the climate change discussion lacked coherence.

FECOF highlighted that it was essential to show consumers and citizens that forestry was a key tool for fighting against climate change and that consistency in policy was vital.

CEPI stated that deforestation was mostly poverty-driven. They also mentioned that the FAO would launch an initiative on sustainable wood for a sustainable world. In the LULUCF Regulation and ESR the Commission proposed a method for calculating the national reference level in forestry. They had had a very intensive debate about the intensity. Guidelines had been drawn up which were still in the recitals. They underlined that if the harvest in Europe was restricted and the economy continued to grow, this would have a huge impact in other regions.

EUSTAFOR stated that it was important to take into account the drivers of deforestation. Market access and finance were important for sustainable development.

Via Campesina mentioned the UN and the governance of land. In 2012, voluntary guidelines were published by the FAO. The Commission should answer to these guidelines. The EP had written a resolution and asked the Commission for an answer on this too.

EEB stressed that the environment needed to be protected at home and abroad.

Answers

The Commission mentioned that the ambition was to have a comprehensive and coordinated approach. The focus was on the drivers of deforestation outside the forestry sector. Forest degradation remained a major issue at global level. The Commission had worked a lot on FLEGT.

Voluntary guidelines and other aspects at multilateral level remained a major area of work.

The Chairman concluded by mentioning ILUC, FLEGT and this study. The issue would continue to be discussed and all elements raised would be taken into account.

3.8. EU adaptation strategy

The Commission (DG CLIMA) gave a presentation on this topic which is available on CIRCABC.

Questions

Copa stressed that the adaptation strategy was even more important than LULUCF when it came to taking active measures. They also mentioned that they hoped for further support from the EU.

Via Campesina underlined that without the involvement of the forestry sector, there would be no change in the way climate change was being tackled. They asked the Commission to respond to their question on the UN guidelines.

CEPF asked about the date of publication.

EEB mentioned that the role of natural solutions should be highlighted.

Answers

Biodiversity was part of the adaptation approach. The publication would depend on the Commission's programme.

Regarding the UN guidelines, the Commission ensured that for questions from the EP to the Commission, strict procedures were in place.

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

The Chair thanked the Vice-Chair Mr Pedro Albizu for his support and efforts in the CDG on Forestry and Cork as it was his last meeting.

Elections would take place in the next meeting.

Concerning the resolution, the chairmanship would try to find a solution but as discussed in the meeting, opinions differed significantly between NGOs and the other organisations.

5. Next steps

The points for discussion that were on the agenda would continue to be debated in the next meetings.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting of the CDG for Forestry and Cork would take place on **28th November 2018**.

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 Forestry and Cork
 Date: 01/06/2018

MEMBER ORGANISATION	NAME	FIRST NAME
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Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI)	ALBIZU	PEDRO
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European Confederation of Woodworking Industries (CEI-Bois)	MELEGARI	Silvia
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European farmers (COPA)	Piconcelli	Silvia
European farmers (COPA)	CASTILLA BARÓ	José María
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European farmers (COPA)	Żarnowski	Kazimierz Grzegorz
European farmers (COPA)	Calliari	Gabriele
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		<i>TOTAL: 50</i>