

# **Contribution to the European Commission's public consultation on the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union**

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**Submission date:** 3 June, 2010

# **The Brussels HUNINEU office's answers to the European Commission's questionnaire on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the EU**

## **1. Why does Europe need a common agricultural policy?**

Primarily for security reasons.

One of the most important lessons of the 2008 global food crisis is that food supply security is among the most vulnerable points of societies of different continents and regions, leaving masses exposed to external changes. Europe has enjoyed remarkably good agricultural and natural resources which seem to be undergoing fundamental changes due to the climate change process. There is a saying: "if there is energy, there is everything." We say: "if there is no food, there is nothing." Agricultural and food security are as important as energy security. Only together we can answer these challenges effectively. This is the main reason for a common agricultural policy.

Secondly, for social reasons. CAP is a means of increasing employment in the agricultural and related sectors thereby constituting an essential element of creating and keeping jobs in rural areas.

Thirdly, for cultural reasons.

European cultures are in close connection with farming traditions. The protection of European agriculture is also the protection of the European cultural heritage.

## **2. What do European citizens expect from agriculture?**

Good quality products at reasonable prices.

The concept of quality primarily means healthy food, but there are growing environment-related expectations, as well as increasing interest in the cultural background of the products.

The maintenance of the landscape and the ecological balance.

Producers' expectations vary depending on the size and type of their operations. (This diversity is also characteristic to Hungarian producers living outside of Hungary.)

The owners of small farms have expectations of social nature, while owners of larger farming businesses want to be competitive against industrial producers.

Farmers also expect fair prices for good products, better access to European market and fair regulations aimed at the protection thereof.

Policies related to agriculture (environment, energy etc) need to be coordinated at European and macro-regional level, in order to ensure long term agricultural and employment sustainability. In the framework thereof, cross-border and inland micro-regional cooperations based on specific geographical and cultural conditions may form part of a new strategy.

### **3. Why must the common agricultural policy be reformed?**

- The security policy aspect should be strengthened (as opposed to giving priority to short-term profit).
- The primary goal should be to achieve competitiveness in the local, regional, national and European markets - thus the viability of the farms – while conquest of the global market should be a secondary goal.
- A simpler and more transparent system is needed
- Small- and medium-sized farms should be prioritized when setting out conditions for EU applications, leaving the decision on further positive discrimination of SMEs to the Member States.
- Regulations are needed which more fully respect food production traditions.
- The traditional farming system should adapt to the challenges of our era, and renewable energy production must be prioritized in agricultural production.
- Closer attention should be given to the agricultural conditions of the macro-regions
- The prestige of CAP should be increased among the EU policies.
- The prestige of agriculture should be increased among the population. (Especially in new Member States, the current trend is moving in precisely the opposite direction).

### **4. What tools do we need for the common agricultural policy of tomorrow?**

- Support for the establishment of cross-border and inland micro-regional product paths. The “ecological footprint” is smaller if the transportation needs are reduced.
- Scientific research in agriculture concerning the perspectives of macro-regions, with special attention to the impacts of the transformation of the post-communist production structure and that of climate change. (HUNINEU has put forward a related proposal as part of the public consultation on the EU Strategy for the Danube Region).
- The establishment of technological transfer networks at macro-regional level, with special attention to eliminate discrimination according to farm size.
- The promotion of the availability of agricultural education and training in the native language in all levels..
- The utilization of the ethno-cultural background of products (e.g. promoting the introduction of trademarks such as "regional Gypsy or Roma product", "Hungarian product from Slovenia, “Szekler product", "Scottish product", etc.).
- Programs to increase the social prestige of agriculture, especially among the youth, and primarily in the new Member States.