

"A simple CAP for Europe – a challenge for all"
Conference on the simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy
organised by the European Commission
Brussels, 3-4 October 2006

Closing address
by Commissioner Mariann Fischer Boel

Ladies and Gentlemen,

From my side I would like to thank you for your active participation and your involvement during this conference. We do not necessarily agree in all cases but we have a passion for agriculture in common. We all want a CAP that is efficient, a CAP that delivers the best possible results at the lowest possible costs. The question is how we can reach this common goal. I am convinced that the discussions we had at this conference will help us to find an answer to that question.

I think we can all agree that technical simplification proposals that have been presented are positive. We also agree that we need more of these proposals. There is still a great scope for simplifying our rules without changing our underlying policies. I am counting on you to help us identifying the provisions that can be improved. In this respect I am glad I can announce that we will organise meetings with the interest groups to discuss simplification issues. The simplest solution will probably be to use the existing consultative committee to have a structured dialogue with all stakeholders concerned also on simplification issues.

We have seen that in the end simplification is also political. We have seen that our decision making processes are not geared to produce simple legislation. Therefore, we need a commitment from all parties – and I am addressing the Member States in particular – to work together to simplify the CAP. This is a question of co-operation and shared responsibility, not a question of blaming each other.

Let me remind you that simplification is not a whim or a funny project to give bureaucrats something to do. It is vital that we reduce the red tape for our farmers and for the agriculture sector in general. If we want to have a competitive agriculture, we must keep the administrative burden at the minimum.

I will do everything I can to promote simplification. My services will remain active in chasing up technical simplification projects. We will make proposals to simplify our policies. Policy reforms are being prepared and I intend to have a more general simplification exercise in the framework of the health check.

Ladies and gentlemen, simplification in itself is a vague concept and it is difficult to live up to. This conference has served to understand what we need and want. We also saw what simplification is not about. And our debates served to underline that simplification needs the support from all parties concerned. As Dirk Ahner has pointed out quite rightly: this conference is over and now we have to deliver !