



Bruxelles, le 22/03/2010
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AGRI-ENV CORRESPONDENTS GROUP MEETING
19th March 2010
Draft Summary Record

1. Agenda

The agenda was approved without modification.

2. Approval of the draft summary record of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without modification. It was recalled that this is an informal meeting and that only a summary records would be provided.

3. The role of the Agri-Environment Correspondents' Group

The chairman, Mrs. Anna Barnett from DG Environment, welcomed the participants, and reminded them that the Agri-Environment Correspondents Group (AECG) has the objective of supporting the integration of environmental concerns into agricultural policy, and of reviewing the state of this integration.

The AECG was set up in 1997 at the request of the Environment Policy Review Group – the group of Environment Ministry Directors General that meets under the chairmanship of the DG Environment Director General. The aim of the AECG meetings is to provide a informal forum to discuss the interface between agriculture and environment, and related policies. Participants are encouraged to be open about integration issues. The summary records are short, and contributions are not attributed to particular Member States.

4. Riparian buffer strips: a great environmental opportunity

Ms. Eva Viestova (DG ENV. B1) made a presentation on riparian buffer strips. In particular, she underlined that riparian buffer strips are useful for protecting water from pollution, providing a refuge for wildlife, enhancing existing biodiversity and providing a connected network of natural areas. She gave an overview about the instruments that can be used to achieve the environmental goals. Member states could use cross compliance or incentive payments. A good solution would be to use both compulsory and voluntary approaches in combination.

The debate focused on how to compensate farmers for loss of income in riparian buffer strips.

5. Green Paper on Forest Protection and Information in the EU adopted 1st March 2010

A presentation on the Green Paper on Forest Protection was given by Mr. Joost Van de Velde (DG ENV. B1). He explained the roots of this Green Paper, starting from the EU Forest Action Plan. He gave an historical overview of EU involvement in Forest issues, underlining the functions of EU forests from the socio-economic and environmental viewpoint. In particular, he stressed the impacts of climate change on forests, in terms of increase in water stress, risk of storm damage, fire, changes in nutrient balance in soil and migration of tree species as well as other organisms. The result is the loss of carbon and biodiversity.

At the end of the presentation, he invited participants to contribute to the debate by replying to the consultation exercise on the Green Paper, e.g. on how to balance forest functions? Are existing policies adequate to address the challenges? What can/should the EU do? etc.

6. Meet who is under our feet – everything you always wanted to know about soil biodiversity

A presentation on the Soil Biodiversity was given by Mr. Luca Marmo (DG ENV B1). He highlighted the problems related to climate change, land use and inadequate land management, invasive species and soil degradation processes, like contamination, sealing, erosion, organic matter decline, salinisation, compaction and landslides.

7. Expected financial needs to deliver environmental objectives in the post 2013 period.

Mr. Krzysztof Sulima (DG ENV B1) made a brief presentation on the question of financial needs to deliver environmental objectives in the post 2013 period, in order to stimulate a debate. He showed the rural development budget 2007-2013 and the total EAFRD spending 2007-2013 by axis. He underlined the goals and financial needs in terms of biodiversity protection (halting the loss and restoring biodiversity), soil (ensure high level of soil protection and its sustainable use), water (good status) but also pesticides, forestry and climate change.

There was a debate focused in particular on the financial instruments which could be used to achieve the above-mentioned goals.

8. Public Goods and Agriculture

A presentation was given by Ms. Tamsin Cooper (IEEP) who presented a study on public goods from agriculture, carried out by IEEP on behalf of DG Agriculture. She explained the policy context and background to the study, starting from the difference between environmental public goods (farmland biodiversity, agricultural landscapes, high quality water, air, soil and climate stability) and social public goods (rural vitality, farm animal welfare and food security). At the end of the presentation she highlighted the six challenges for a future policy (consistent policy framework, establishing appropriate targets, enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of measures, improving implementation, effective monitoring and evaluation, securing sufficient budgetary resources)

The debate focused on land use and environmental objectives.

9. EU Biodiversity Policy

A presentation was given by Mrs. Natalie Pauwels (DG ENV B2). She explained the post-2010 policy development (January 2010 communication and March 2010 council conclusions). She recalled the vision for 2050 and the options for a 2020 headline targets, included the option retained by the Council (halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU by 2020 and restore them insofar as possible, and step up the EU's contribution to averting global biodiversity loss).

10. The EU's nature conservation policy and Natura 2000 implementation

Mr. Marco Cipriani (DG ENV B3) made a presentation starting from the EU policy framework on adaptation to climate change. He illustrated the Birds and the Habitats Directives. He explained the future priorities (setting conservation objectives for Natura 2000 sites, designating sites, securing the long-term management of sites, promoting good management practices, ensuring better integration of Natura 2000 into broader countryside and into other policy sectors, promoting Natura 2000 as a part of climate change adaptation).

The presentation was followed by a brief debate, particularly focused on Natura and Rural Development.

11. LIFE + and Agriculture

A brief presentation was given by Mr. Santiago Urquijo (DG ENV E4) on LIFE agriculture related projects.

Conclusion

Interest was expressed by participants in having meetings at least once a year. The chairman invited participants to let the Commission know if there were points they particularly wished to see on the agenda for the next meeting. It was agreed that, where possible, the presentations from this meeting would be made available to those present. The chairman told participants that the next meeting would probably take place towards the beginning of 2011