

# The Common Agricultural Policy after 2013 Your ideas matter

## The Common Agricultural Policy after 2013 – Public Debate Executive summary of contributions



European Commission  
Agriculture and  
Rural Development



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The Common Agricultural Policy is due to be reformed by 2013. A formal public consultation on the CAP post-2013 will be undertaken later this year when the Commission will publish a policy paper setting out different options for the future CAP.

On 12 April 2010 the Commissioner invited all interested EU citizens and organisations – whether or not they work in the area of agriculture– to join the debate on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy, its principles and objectives. This on-line debate stayed open till 11 June 2010. The intention was to give as many EU citizens and stakeholders as possible the opportunity to have their say early on in the reflection process about the future CAP. Their responses will provide input to the policymakers; a formal consultation procedure will be launched once the Commission issues a Communication on the subject later in the year.

### **Methodology**

A special site was created on the website of DG Agriculture where respondents could post their views, structured around four key questions. Responses were invited from three broad categories:

- General public
- Stakeholders
- Think tanks, research institutes and others

The public were asked to respond, on-line, with their answers to the questions. The Commission invited certain stakeholders and think tanks, research institutes and others to submit more detailed papers, also centred on the four questions, providing in addition shorter summaries of their positions on the topics.

During the same period the Commission invited the national rural networks and other members of the European Network for Rural Development (EN RD) to launch discussions in their respective countries/organisations and to provide contributions to the public debate through the EN RD.

An independent group of experts and writers summarised the contributions received. This report is their summary of respondents' views. It is not an analysis of those views, and it does not comment on their value. It should be stressed that the responses do not represent a survey of a cross-section of society. They reflect the views of those with sufficient interest in the subject to make statements, and of bodies encouraged by the Commission to take part in this debate.

Some 5700 submissions were published. The response of, in particular, the general public greatly exceeded expectations.

### **The answers to four key questions**

The four questions were broad. Answers to different questions sometimes overlapped. Others lacked focus. Nevertheless, some major themes emerged.

#### ***Question 1 - Why do we need a European common agricultural policy?***

Most stakeholders and think tanks, research institutes and others believe that a common agricultural policy at EU level is more desirable than a series of national/regional policies, or no agricultural policies at all. Many, but not all, argue that several reforms of the CAP in recent years have taken agricultural policy in the right direction. There is widespread agreement that a common EU policy is the key to ensure a level playing field within the EU, guaranteeing fair competition conditions. The general public too stressed the need for fairness throughout the agri-food chain and among member states. Many respondents underlined that the CAP is essential for EU food security – this was the first comment made by many respondents, from all of the groups making submissions.

Many respondents, from all sections of society, argue that a CAP should aim to maintain diversified farming systems across Europe, particularly in remote areas, and to ensure delivery of multiple public goods. However there are divergent views about how the CAP should achieve this. Some believe that the CAP is essential in order to allow farmers to continue in business in circumstances where markets cannot provide the right economic returns, and where they face high costs of production often associated with providing public goods. Such respondents argue that farmers should therefore be supported for being farmers and rewarded for additional public goods they may provide. Other respondents believe that the main focus of the CAP should be on public good provision, with farmers only being supported where these goods are delivered, and on contributing to territorial cohesion, maintaining and enhancing the vitality of rural areas.

#### ***Question 2 – What do citizens expect from agriculture?***

There are consistent views from all strands of society that the main purposes of EU agriculture should be:

- Provision of a safe, healthy choice of food, at transparent and affordable prices;
- Ensuring sustainable use of the land;
- Activities that sustain rural communities and the countryside;

- Security of food supply.

Many respondents argue that citizens want EU agriculture to respect the environment, decrease its impact on global warming and maintain biodiversity, water resources etc. Many feel that sustainable family farming produces a wide range of benefits and is recognised for that by European citizens. A significant number of respondents stressed the importance of the agriculture sector in providing employment in rural areas. This view was particularly prominent in a number of member states.

There is a widespread view that citizens want high quality food products. Most argue that these should be provided at reasonable prices to consumers. Many others say farmers too need fair prices for food products. For the general public food should be healthy, natural (many say specifically that this means no GMOs or pesticides should be used) and produced in an environmentally friendly manner (concerning water, soil and air quality) and traceable. Many say that imported foods should meet the EU's high standards.

### ***Question 3 – Why reform the CAP?***

The main arguments put forward for further CAP reform are to:

- Enable farmers, the food chain and consumers to deal with the increased instability/volatility of agricultural raw material and food prices;
- Address increasing global demand (and the general trend towards increasingly open global markets);
- Restructure payments within the CAP, and simplify administrative procedures;
- Give greater importance to non-market items, such as environment, quality and health standards, sustainability;
- Respond to the effects of climate change;
- Take into account the various higher expectations from consumers, for example with regard to the origin of foodstuffs, guarantees of quality etc;
- Strengthen the competitiveness of European agriculture;
- Ensure better coordination with other EU policies applying to rural areas.

Other issues raised include: a lack of equity in applying the CAP across the 27 member states; the functioning of the food chain; the need for market management tools; the small farmer versus large farmer debate; the impact of the CAP on the developing world.

### ***Question 4 – What tools do we need for the CAP of tomorrow?***

A large number of respondents argue for the current direction of the CAP to be maintained with relatively minor alterations. However, another significant proportion of respondents favours re-focusing the CAP to link agricultural production, and farmers' compensation, more closely to the delivery of public goods such as environmental services. Responses from the general public indicate that there would be widespread support for this. There are varying views between these two poles. There are calls for greater citizen involvement in the devising and implementing of future policy.

A wide variety of tools were suggested under various scenarios, including new market stabilisation instruments, training programmes, local strategies, producer groups, food promotion and improved market and other data/information sources. A strongly held view, particularly among the general public is that 'industrial' agriculture should have little place in the CAP, its support being more appropriately directed to more deserving recipients (in disadvantaged areas, mountain zones, organic farmers or one of several other categories mentioned).

## **Conclusions**

It is hard to draw conclusions from the array of views received. However a number of themes emerged which have considerable support from the wide range of contributors. These themes represent the middle ground among respondents. Some would want to go further; others less far. From the submissions, we have identified 12 directions to be followed. The EU should:

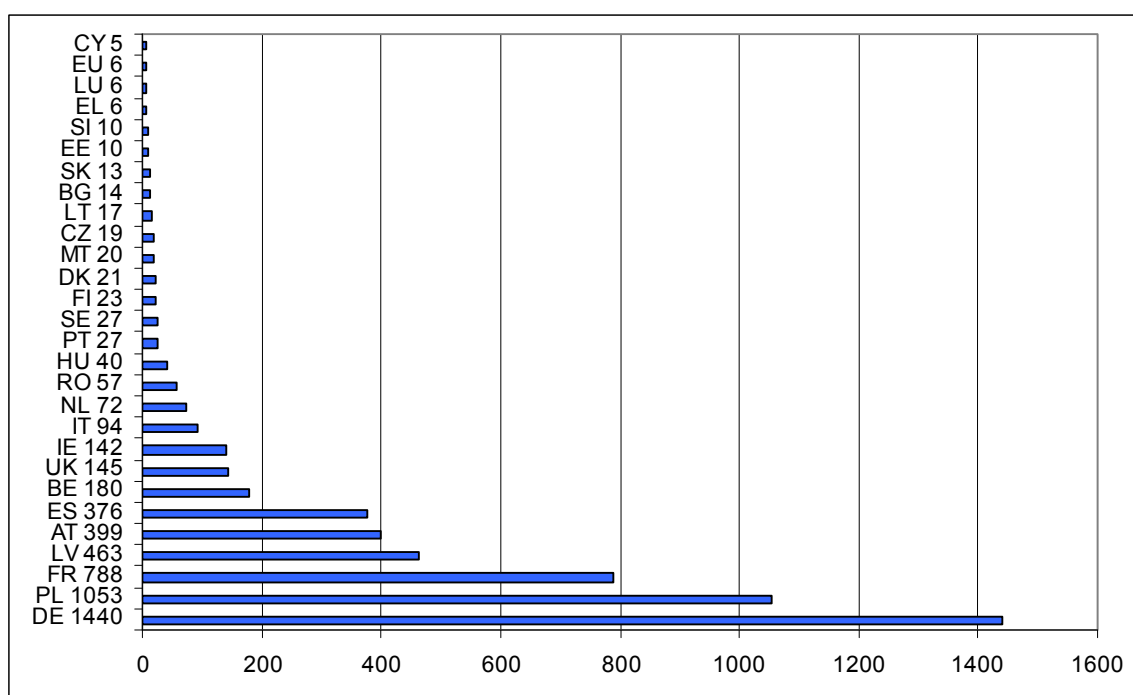
- Take a strategic approach to CAP reform. Go for total, not partial, solutions taking account of CAP challenges on the one hand and the interplay between the CAP and other internal and external EU policies on the other hand;
- Ensure that the CAP guarantees food security for the EU, using a number of tools to achieve this aim;
- Continue to push the competitive and potentially competitive sectors of European agriculture towards operating in a market context, giving more importance to innovation and dissemination of research;
- Transform market intervention into a modern risk- and crisis-management tool;
- Recognise that the market cannot (or will not) pay for the provision of public goods and benefits. This is where public action has to offset market failure;
- Bear in mind that the correct payment to farmers for the delivery of public goods and services will be a key element in a reformed CAP;
- Protect the environment and biodiversity, conserve the countryside, sustain the rural economy and preserve/create rural jobs, mitigate climate change;
- Rethink the structure of the two support pillars and clarify the relationship between them; make adequate resources available for successful rural development;
- Implement a fairer CAP – fairer to small farmers, to less-favoured regions, to new member states;
- Introduce transparency along the food chain, with a greater say for producers;
- Create fair competition conditions between domestic and imported products;
- Avoid damaging the economies or food production capacities of developing countries; help in the fight against world hunger.

## Annex – Statistics about contributions

### Type of contribution

Type of contribution	Number of contributions
General public	5473
Stakeholders	93
Think tanks, research institutes and other contributions	80
European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) <sup>1</sup>	36

### Contributions from general public published on the Website (by country of origin)



<sup>1</sup> Contributions available on [http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/cap-consultation-process\\_home\\_en/en/debate-contributions\\_en.cfm](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/cap-consultation-process_home_en/en/debate-contributions_en.cfm)