

PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE FUTURE OF THE CAP

Questions on the rural development aspects

In view of the upcoming discussions on the future of the EU policies and their funding after 2013, a broad public debate on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is currently being launched (see <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-debate>).

Four questions are proposed to structure the general debate:

- 1 *Why do we need a European Common Agricultural Policy?*
- 2 *What are society's objectives for agriculture in all its diversity?*
- 3 *Why should we reform the current CAP and how can we make it meet society's expectations?*
- 4 *What tools do we need for tomorrow's CAP?*

To further feed the debate Commissioner Dacian Cioloş has pointed to some of the main and often interlinked challenges and issues European agriculture and rural areas will be facing in the 21st century such as the global food situation, the preservation of our natural resources, the diversity of our farm systems and structures and the vitality and growth potential of our rural areas.

The European Network for Rural Development (EN RD) which is engaged with stakeholders for an effective delivery of rural development policy can also usefully feed into the reflection on the future of the CAP and in particular its rural development component.

Rural development policy underpins the important links between agriculture and rural areas covering 90% of the territory and 50% of the population of the EU. The policy has recently benefited from additional funds, through the Health Check of the CAP and the European Economic Recovery Package, for the purpose of meeting new challenges (climate change, renewable energy, water management, biodiversity, innovation and dairy restructuring).

The following set of questions is proposed to guide contributions more specifically on the rural development policy aspects. Part A corresponds to the general questions 1 and 2, while part B and C relate to questions 3 and 4.

A. What should be the objectives of the future rural development policy?

The EU rural development policy contributes today to the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry, the sustainable management of natural resources, the preservation of habitats and the rural countryside, and the balanced development of rural areas. These objectives are closely linked to the EU priorities for growth and jobs, protection of the environment and social and territorial cohesion.

Despite their considerable diversity, European agriculture and rural areas will face in the future a number of common challenges to which the CAP will be called upon to respond. These include the competitive pressure on the agricultural sector from global markets and increased price volatility, the pressure on natural resources due to increased demand for food and feed, as well as climate change, land use change, and adverse demographic and socio-economic developments in certain rural areas.

- In the light of the future challenges for agriculture and rural areas, what should be the objectives of the rural development policy after 2013?
- What place should rural development occupy, within the future CAP and alongside the other EU policies, to make a meaningful contribution to the future EU priorities?

B. How can the policy instruments be made more effective?

Programming follows at present a strategic approach based on strategic guidelines at EU level and national strategy plans reflecting the specific situation in each Member State. These are then translated into programmes with Member States drawing from a common toolkit of measures grouped into 4 axes. The Common Monitoring Evaluation Framework (CMEF) is then used to monitor and evaluate results and thus demonstrate the impact of the policy.

- How can support be better targeted to bring about the most efficient allocation of resources, and thus to maximize the added value of the policy in pursuit of the future EU priorities?
- In the light of experience to date, is the existing toolkit of measures adequate for meeting the policy objectives? What role should be played by Leader in the future?
- How can we develop and improve evaluation methods and the underlying common indicators to best assess policy impact and render results visible without putting too much burden on Member States and beneficiaries?

C. How can the management of the policy be improved?

The current approach of sharing responsibility for the management of the policy with Member States provides the necessary flexibility for setting strategic orientations in line with the EU priorities at EU level, while tailoring solutions to the situation of each rural area concerned. In addition, since different funds and policies intervene in rural areas, the coordination and complementarity between different EU funds can be reinforced. At the same time, simplification is important for users to reap the full benefits of the policy.

- How can the policy be better managed, including better coordination with other policies for the purpose of ensuring a coherent approach in rural areas?
- In what ways can both content and delivery be simplified, so as to facilitate implementation and empower local actors, without compromising the objectives of the policy and sound financial management?

Other useful links to reports and studies:

Provision of public goods through agriculture in the European Union
(http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/analysis/external/public-goods/index_en.htm)

Scenar 2020 II – Update of scenario study on agriculture and the rural world
(http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/analysis/external/scenar2020ii/index_en.htm)

For general information on the current programming period see <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu>