

**FINAL Minutes**  
**CIVIL DIALOGUE GROUP ON FORESTRY AND CORK**  
**8<sup>th</sup> of June 2017**

**1. Adoption of the minutes of the last meeting and of the agenda**

The Chair asked the members to approve the minutes of the previous meeting and the agenda. The minutes were approved after a remark from Via Campesina on UN voluntary guidelines on land use in the context of food security. Via Campesina suggested that the topic could be included in the agenda of the next CDG on Forestry and Cork as they would like to know how the Commission intends to improve the implementation of the guidelines in Member States.

The agenda was approved.

**2. Adoption of resolutions on CAP and EUTR**

The Chair presented two draft resolutions of the group: 1) “The CDG Forestry & Cork calls on the Commission to expand the scope of products covered by the EU Timber Regulation to include all wood based products”, and 2) “Recognise the role of forestry in the future Common Agricultural Policy”

The draft resolutions had been sent out to the members for their comments before the meeting. The Chair presented the received comments and asked for the members’ approval.

The group discussed the resolutions and both resolutions were approved with some changes.

**Points for information**

**3. EU Timber Regulation**

The European Commission, DG ENV, gave a presentation on the preliminary follow-up of the review of the EU Timber Regulation.

Questions and comments:

**FECOF** thanked the Commission for the presentation and asked if it would be possible to receive a written summary of the topic and figures.

**CEPF** asked the Commission the impact of UK and Brexit on the regulation.

**CEPI** highlighted the importance of information on supply flows for the sector and reminded about the efforts made to provide all necessary case information to the Commission.

Answers from the Commission:

The Commission informed the members that the study has not yet being finalized and still need more time before making it public. The Commission intends to publish both Member States' reports and Commission report in due course.

Regarding the UK and Brexit, the Commission said that it is still early to have a clear picture.

The Commission acknowledged the efforts made by competent authorities and companies and highlighted the importance of Member States in providing them with all positive and negative information. Moreover, the Commission noted the importance of well-functioning regulation in third countries and noted that the high number of checks is important.

The Commission announced that there will be a 12 week online public consultation on the issue, foreseen to open by summer.

#### **4. Action Plan following the Fitness Check of the Nature Directives**

The European Commission, DG ENV, gave a presentation on the Commission Action Plan following the Fitness Check of the Nature Directives. The presentation is available on CIRCABC.

##### Questions and comments:

**EURAF** asked about the Action Plans' connection to different initiatives and platforms, such as operational groups, thematic groups and focus groups.

**ECVC** noted that the topic is not easy and there has been a number of conflicts around it.

**EUSTAFOR** thanked the Commission for the comprehensive presentation and asked about the role of different stakeholders in the Action Plan. In addition, the representative reminded that measures need to be consulted and approved by forest owners and managers. Consequently, successful implementation means that the owners and managers are well informed and supported by well-functioning financial instruments.

**COPA** said that they are a part of the Natura 2000 users' forum together with CEPF and ELO. Moreover, it was stressed that the Commission's support is needed in order to enhance farmers' contribution as socio-economic impacts of nature policies have to be taken into account. In addition, it was mentioned that cooperation between stakeholders and Member States could be further strengthened and therefore the action six was very much welcomed from the COPA's side.

**COGECA** reminded the Commission that public consultations are not always easily available for farmers and more innovative ways of bottom up approaches should be considered.

**CEPI** asked if the conservation percentage of 10 % apply to all countries. Furthermore, CEPI asked the Commission if it has an impact assessment, especially on timber and trade, on proposed declarations.

**FECOF** mentioned that the Court of Auditors has stated that the proposed financial tools are not sufficient to improve local governance, guidelines, site management and developing rural areas. The representative asked how the Commission is going to take this this recommendation into account in the implementation of the Action Plan.

**Via Campesina** talked about increasing bark beetle problems in Natura 2000 sites and losses in income and asked how the Commission will react on this.

#### Answers from the Commission:

The Commission emphasized that all stakeholders involved are part of the process. More precisely, measures are being discussed with stakeholders and steering groups are being created. In addition, it was mentioned that active Member States are also key to successful implementation.

The Commission thanked the stakeholders for their commitment and addressed the importance of forest owners in the implementation. The Commission said that the lack of integrated site management plan is a challenge and joint forces are needed to integrate socio-economic objectives into the implementation. The Commission encouraged foresters to be more active on it and noted that bark beetle problem can be tackled effectively with right kind of management of the sites.

### **5. Bioeconomy Strategy update on expert review process**

The European Commission, DG RTD, gave a presentation on the ongoing review of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy. The presentation is available on CIRCABC.

#### Questions and comments:

**COPA** remarked that many Member States have their own national strategies and this is a signal of the importance of the topic. COPA spoke about the positive contribution of the bioeconomy to climate change mitigation and the importance to strengthen the role of the strategy in the future.

**CEPF** said it fully supports the update of the strategy and noted that the actions in the current strategy are lacking ambition. Furthermore, the role of primary producers should be strengthened and it would be crucial that the bioeconomy goes beyond research and innovation. In addition, CEPF pointed out that other policies, such as climate policies, should not hamper the development of the bioeconomy. CEPF asked the Commission if the results of the review group will be publicly available and why forest sector is not sufficiently represented in the Europea Bioeconomy Stakeholder Panel.

**USSE** stressed the importance of the bioeconomy and raised the ongoing initiatives on developing regional bioeconomy in southern Europe, including examples of

promoting wooden constructions. USSE wished that the review will result in an update of the strategy.

**Birdlife** noted that primary production and nature have a fundamental role in the bioeconomy as it shows how we take care of it. They argued that bioeconomy should focus more on how to make production more sustainable. Birdlife argued that from their perspective foresters are very well represented in the European Bioeconomy Stakeholder Panel.

**ELO** noted that economical aspects are crucial in the bioeconomy and asked of the assessment of these aspects.

**FERN** noted that it is important to bear in mind that the bioeconomy existed for a long time and its results are visible as net emissions are increasing due to increased harvesting. FERN noted that circular use of materials and strong safeguards are needed in order to strengthen bioeconomy's benefits for people, climate and nature.

**COGECA** stressed the importance of finding synergies between the Circular Economy and the Bioeconomy.

#### Answers from the Commission

The Commission stressed that reducing fossil fuel dependence is at the core of the agenda, also in the bioeconomy.

Regarding CEPF's question on the expert review report, the Commission said that they intend to make it public. The final form of the report is still to be decided. The report will be used as background when the Commission drafts the Staff Working Document to be published at the end of the year.

The Commission considered that the forest sector is well represented in the Stakeholder Panel. Furthermore, there are ten regional representatives and two of them are focused on forest-based bioeconomy. The Commission has encouraged the participation of cities and regions in the bioeconomy as their role was not properly addressed in the current 2012 EU Bioeconomy Strategy. In addition, the policy context has changed via the launch of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and this also would have an impact on the possible update of the strategy.

Moreover, the Commission said that economic and ecological sustainability are both opportunities and the aim is to meet both. The Commission noted that it should be ensured that all actors in the value chain get a fair income and the biomass supply is sustainable in the long term. The Commission noted that the Circular Economy Package also aims at using less resources in a better way and both are the EU instruments to fulfill Paris Agreement and reach SDGs.

## **6. Information on Commission initiatives related to Ecosystem Services and forestry, including MAES and Pegasus**

The European Commission, DG ENV and JRC, gave a presentation on MAES and Pegasus project. The presentations are available on CIRCABC.

### Questions and comments:

**COPA** asked about the link between MAES and Pegasus initiatives and already existing programs. Furthermore, COPA asked about the role of Member States and national research organisations.

**COPA** pointed out that the mapping already exists and how to adapt to existing systems.

**EURAF** said they would like that silos between forestry and agricultural ecosystems would be removed and spoke about the Copernicus database and environmental impacts of trees with large crown cover in agricultural areas.

**Via Campesina** wished to see more Nordic research on natural disturbances and forest fires.

**EUSTAFOR** asked which data is being used when ecosystems were mapped. EUSTAFOR also mentioned already existing data of national forest inventories such as Forest Europe and FAO and asked if synergies were looked at. Moreover, EUSTAFOR asked what is the objective of the initiative and who will be using the information.

### Answers from the Commission:

The Commission underlined that many stakeholders are involved in the process and that MAES organises two yearly meetings with Member States and stakeholders for providing updated information regarding planning and all the activities related with the MAES working group. The MAES activities are planned to facilitate Member States to reach the targets of the Biodiversity Strategy. The activities of Member States regarding MAES are coordinated by DG ENV, however it is expected that each Member State exploits their national level data and forest inventories.

The Commission clarified that MAES and Pegasus are different as Pegasus is a RTD Horizon 2020 project being implemented by a consortium of EU research institutions, whereas MAES is an initiative of the Commission that is being implemented by Member States at pan-European level. Nevertheless, some synergies between MAES and Pegasus can be found regarding indicators and data on ecosystem services.

Regarding the integration of agriculture and forestry the Commission mentioned that there is a MAES pilot on agriculture working in close coordination with the MAES forest pilot (and other pilots). Additionally, the Commission noted that the importance of natural disturbances such as storms in Nordic countries are covered by the MAES work on forest condition and that this is complemented by national inventory data and other indicators.

## **7. The EUFORGEN Programme and the Pan-European strategy for genetic conservation of forest trees presented by Dr Bozzano from EUFORGEN**

Dr Michele Bozzano gave a presentation on the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN). The presentation is available on CIRCABC.

### Questions and comments:

**COPA** thanked Mr Bozzano for the presentation and highlighted the importance of the project for e.g. improvement of biomass availability.

**CEPF** addressed the importance of genetics and evolution of different species and the importance of conserving their origin. CEPF thanked for the excellent mapping illustration made by the project.

**EURAF** highlighted that with the risk of losing species we also lose products that are delivered from them, which may be of significant importance in certain regions.

**COPA** commented that the project is good and the aim at making it international was very much welcomed. It was also reminded that climate change is happening quickly and besides conserving existing ecosystems we should aim to adapt to the changing climate conditions.

### Answers from EUFORGEN:

Mr Bozzano thanked for being invited to present EUFORGEN and for the acknowledgement of the added value the project is bringing to active forest management and conservation.

He added that the project develops guidelines and for France there is a special strategy and a tool to observe the evolution of different species. The aim is to identify 100-150 of the economically most valuable species.

## **Points for discussion**

### **8. The future of the CAP and the place of forests – Speeches by Director Mr Pierre Bascou (DG AGRI) and Head of Unit Mr Peter Wehrheim (DG CLIMA)**

The European Commission Director Mr Pierre Bascou (DG AGRI) and Head of Unit Mr Peter Wehrheim (DG CLIMA) gave speeches on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy and the place of forests.

**CEPF** thanked for the speeches and asked about the CAP budget and the role of UK. Furthermore, CEPF asked the opinion of the Director/HoU on the review of the EU Forest Strategy in the context of future CAP.

**EURAF** talked about the Land Use Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) consultation two years ago and highlighted EURAF's wish to have an integrated land use pillar to better respond to the needs of agroforestry. EURAF criticized the choice of the Commission made in the framework of climate and energy package as agricultural non-CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are a part of the Effort Sharing Regulation and other agricultural and forestry emissions/removals a part of LULUCF regulation.

**COPA** talked about the role of climate change and bioeconomy in the future CAP and asked the Commission how to ensure that the forest sector is able to fully contribute to the bioeconomy with support from CAP. In addition, COPA asked how to ensure that LULUCF also aims at supporting the development of the bioeconomy. Furthermore, COPA stressed the need for developing regional policies and ensuring that right CAP tools are in place to enhance contribution to the bioeconomy.

**CEPF** highlighted the importance of forestry in the future CAP as it would provide multiple benefits and income and jobs to rural areas. Therefore, forestry plays a prominent role in the CAP and forestry measures are also needed in the future. CEPF asked the Commission how it is possible to improve the uptake of these funds. CEPF welcomed the recognition made by DG AGRI on economic viability and repeated that the forests have multiple objectives, as has always been the case. In addition, CEPF called for policy coherence and expressed its concern towards the current policy development of the LULUCF regulation and the rules of setting the Forest Reference Levels. CEPF stated that the big picture is overlooked as these rules appear restrictive. CEPF also mentioned that result-based payments do not match with long-term timeframes of forestry.

**Birdlife** mentioned the results of Eurobarometer and noted that public perception of climate change and agriculture differs from discussions in Brussels. Birdlife asked the Commission how to ensure that new CAP will deliver for public and is not so much focused on only farmers.

**ECVC** addressed that forestry provides livelihoods and the current CAP has had negative impact on small and medium-sized farmers due to e.g. access to finance and land for farmers. Consequently, ECVC addressed negative impacts of CAP on land concentration and mentioned a report adopted by the European Parliament on the issue. ECVC asked how the Commission is going to take into account the Parliament report when developing the new CAP.

**COGECA** asked if the Commission could support countries such as Croatia in cleaning forest land after war, where mines are still a big problem.

**COPA** talked about the evaluation of forestry measures and noted that the current set of measures is good. However, climate change adaptation measure could be further improved. COPA requested a clarification on result-based payments and noted that simplification of policy is needed or it may end up with increased bureaucracy.

**COPA** asked the Commission about special measures to tackle climate change.

**EURAF** expressed its general concern on climate change and asked about the role of agroforestry in future CAP.

**COGECA** mentioned the public consultation and encouraged the Commission to look at the answers in a differentiated way as farmers feed their input via organizations. On another note, COGECA stressed that climate policy should not make managed forest as a source of emission. Policy coherence is crucial.

**ECVC** called for more transparent approach when it comes to subsidies and pointed out that the same request has been stressed by the Parliament. Furthermore, ECVC highlighted the subsidiarity of Member States when it comes to climate and forests.

**CEPF** pointed out that the EU policy is too much focused on climate change mitigation whereas adaptation is also crucial especially for Southern Europe.

**WWF** stressed that the aim of public consultations is to get the citizens' input into EU Commission policy making and policy proposals. How a citizen provides input, e.g. in replying directly individually to a public consultation or following an action organized by a group of stakeholders should not be of concern or lead to valuing this input less.

#### Answers from the Commission:

The Commission noted that currently the political situation is uncertain and when the Commission knows more about the funds available in the Multi-Annual Financial Framework it will become more clear. Currently the Commission is assessing different options and will provide tangible proposals as soon as it is feasible. In general, the new political priorities are currently being discussed. On another note the Director expressed his own opinion that the CAP has a major role to play and it is not jeopardized.

The Commission informed that the role of R&D, infrastructure and national and regional policies are being discussed and will be addressed optimally. The Commission said that the political cohesion is important and different overlapping instruments in the CAP would be examined in order to better respond to decreasing budget conditions.

It was noted by the Commission that the CAP has made a significant contribution to sustainable agriculture and forestry and that the contribution of these sectors to climate change mitigation are increasingly important due to Paris Agreement and other developments.

Regarding EURAF's comment on integrated land use pillar the Commission noted that many argued in favor of the current approach proposed by the Commission. Long-term climate change mitigation potential of agriculture and forestry sectors should be balanced with food security and the bioeconomy is positive if it is done in the climate friendly way. The Commission mentioned already existing agroforestry and afforestation measures and initiatives under Horizon 2020 and Life programme.

The Commission especially thanked the members for the questions related to climate change, bioeconomy, CAP and forestry. It was highlighted that the future

CAP will deliver for public and farmers are a part of this group. All aspects of sustainability must be addressed and a balanced approach sought.

Regarding access to land, the Commission questioned if it is happening due to current CAP and would it be possible to use an instrument in CAP to tackle the problems. However, the Commission said that the Member States need to address the issue rather than limiting the access of certain investors to land. It should be noted that e.g. tax and inheritance legislations have also an impact and it should be kept in mind that the issue is politically sensitive and in hands of Member States. Therefore, the Commission prefers to take more careful steps when addressing the issue. The Commission is well aware that in certain countries the land has been bought by certain actors but one should be careful when labelling it as a CAP problem.

Regarding the possible future measure for land destroyed by war the Commission said that there are measures for cleaning agricultural land and perhaps the same kind of mechanism could be considered for forest land as well. The Commission took note of the question and promised to further investigate the possibilities.

The Commission DG CLIMA addressed that the economic viability is also a crucial pillar of sustainability. However, in relation to the medium and long-term risk associated to climate change DG CLIMA foresees that actions to mitigate climate change enhances economic opportunities for farmers and forest owners. Consequently, policies have created opportunities for using renewable resources but the policy is never one sided.

The Commission DG CLIMA disagreed with CEPF's comment on Forest Reference Level as the Commission considers the proposed approach balanced taking into account current energy policies. The Commission noted that it is important to account bioenergy emissions in LULUCF sector as only that provides justification for zero accounting in the Emission Trading System. The Commission considers the latter as crucial incentive for the bioeconomy.

The Commission DG AGRI stressed the importance of climate action at all levels. Regarding the public consultation, the Commission mentioned constraints with 1<sup>st</sup> pillar payments and underlined that the Commission is working with the issue. It was noted that holistic approach should be addressed when assessing the consultation that received 322,000 answers and statements from stakeholders and Member States. The Commission mentioned problems caused by organized campaigns as it should be clarified if the contribution came from the same server. The Commission said that the position papers are extremely important.

The Commission DG CLIMA discussed that official position of LULUCF is still open as the regulation is still under development. The Commission regretted the latest approach of USA to Paris Agreement and highlighted the importance of active forest management. The Commission pointed out that the proposal does not lock the future harvesting to the past and proposed Forest Reference Levels are dynamic as it takes into account the forest type and age structure. Furthermore, the Commission claimed that the proposal fully respects Member States competence on forestry and common internationally agreed CO<sub>2</sub> accounting frameworks. The Commission noted that climate change adaptation is taken into account in LULUCF as CO<sub>2</sub>

emissions caused by natural disturbances are excluded from the accounting. Furthermore, current CAP includes measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation and this link provides opportunities to enhance the link between CAP and climate policy.

## **9. Forest biomass criteria in the RED Recast**

The European Commission, DG ENER gave a presentation on the forest biomass sustainability criteria in the recast of the Renewable Energy Directive.

Due to lack of time there was no discussion on this topic.

**Birdlife** stressed that this should be avoided in the future and there should be enough time for discussion.

### *Disclaimer*

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