The Common Agriculural Policy (CAP) is a contract between the farmers and citizens of Europe; for over 60 years, it has guaranteed food security for our people by guaranteeing our family farmers a fair income for their work.

EU Agriculture and related sectors employ approximately 44 million people – making this the largest employer in the EU. Through our system of Direct Payments and Rural Development Policy, the CAP directly supports the creation of jobs and growth in rural areas.

It is also a dynamic, living policy, which evolves to reflect the societal priorities of the day.

We are now entering another period of evolution for the CAP. The EU Commission believes we need a simpler and more modern policy which works better for both our farmers and society as a whole. Our farmers want simpler, more effective policy supports; while our citizens want a CAP which delivers real results in a broader range of areas, such as the environment, climate, and rural job creation.

For this reason, the Commission recently published a Communication outlining our policy vision for the CAP post 2020. I believe this document strikes the right balance and presents a realistic and ambitious direction of travel for our food and farming sector.

In 2018, the European Commission will make legislative proposals for the CAP post-2020, as well as for the next EU budget (2020-2027). We will also propose new laws to improve the position of our farmers on the EU food chain.

I am calling on all agri-food stakeholders, rural policymakers and concerned citizens to support our plans for an upgraded, strong and well-funded CAP.

In return, we plan to support the wellbeing of our farming and food sector for the coming decade, while delivering more benefits for all Europeans.
Simplification remains my top priority as Agriculture Commissioner. After a raft of simplifying measures in 2016, including the “Yellow Card” system for first offenders, I have pushed for even more changes in 2017.

Foremost among these is the so-called “Omnibus” proposal - a mid-term review for the current CAP Budget (2014-2020). This contains a variety of strong simplifications which prove our commitment to improving our policies in real time. We have listened to our farmers and tried to bring in changes that will make their work easier and more efficient. These important new changes are in force from 1st January 2018.

The new rules give farmers opportunities to form a stronger negotiating position in relation to other players on the food chain. Enhanced dialogue and competition rules will provide farmers with better ways to band together, encouraging more solidarity in the sector. Farmers will be authorised to join forces to sell their products, setting the quantities and quality standards within producers’ organisations, and allowing them the right to have contracts that set prices and volumes clearly.

This can give farmers, working together as one cohesive unit, the same weight as other players in the food chain, like processors & retailers.

There is real progress in other areas, such as providing better capacity to deal with production and market risks; and allowing more flexibility for Member States to help young farmers.

To improve the market resilience of various agri-food sectors, new Income Stability Tools will open the way for specific sectors to develop common-sense schemes that protect farm incomes in the event of a crisis.

These are real improvements and I urge EU Member States to adapt their national programmes quickly and effectively so that farmers and other stakeholders can seize the opportunities available to them.
COMMISSIONER PHIL HOGAN | BUILDING THE FUTURE OF EU FOOD & FARMING

PROTECTING OUR FARMERS IN THE EU FOOD CHAIN

Our farmers are the key link of the food chain but their place is currently not strong enough. The farmer’s share of what EU consumers spend on food is being continuously squeezed by the clear imbalance of power between producers, retailers and other actors.

In my view, this is simply not good enough. To build a fairer and better-functioning food supply chain, the Commission will propose new measures in 2018.

We aim to tackle certain Unfair Trading Practices – this should further strengthen the position of farmers in the market place and help protect them from future shocks. Proposals to improve market transparency will also be submitted in 2018.

These measures are necessary to support our farmers who, in turn, guarantee our food security in Europe.

TRADE AND EXPORTS: GREAT NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR EU FARMERS ON GLOBAL MARKETS

Our farmers are subject to some of the most stringent rules in the world when it comes to food safety and quality. Reaching these standards means more work, but it also means they have a highly attractive and marketable final product. Good food means good business, and EU food and drink products are in high demand among the growing global consumer class.

I have been travelling the world in 2017 to find new markets for our products, most recently to Saudi Arabia and Iran.

This work is paying off: EU agri-food exports continued to grow in 2017. Our most recent figures showed monthly exports at a record level of €11.5 billion, adding up to a 12-month value of more than €130 billion.

Success abroad means success at home: every €1 Billion of agri-food exports supports over 21,000 high-quality jobs for our people, most of them in rural areas.

We are also delivering on the trade agreement front. The EU-Japan agreement signed in July 2017 represents the EU’s biggest ever deal in agri-food trade. It will provide huge growth opportunities for our agri-food exporters in a very large, mature and sophisticated market.

This shows the EU as a global leader and standard-setter in shaping international trade and its rules – a concrete example of how we can harness globalisation to benefit our citizens.
CAP COMMUNICATION:
ROADMAP FOR A SIMPLER, MORE MODERN POLICY

In late 2017, the Commission published a Communication on the CAP post 2020. This hugely important document outlines how we want the policy to evolve to serve Europe’s farmers and citizens better.

The contents of this document have been informed by a number of factors. First, the CAP remains too complex to administer for farmers and authorities alike. **Simplification has been my priority as Commissioner from day one** and I have exhausted every possibility for simplifying the CAP using secondary legislation (see p.2 for more). If we want a real “bonfire of bureaucracy”, we have to make changes using primary legislation.

Second, it is clear that the **CAP must make a stronger contribution to the EU’s ambitious climate and environment targets**. The EU is leading the global fight against climate change at a time when others are shirking their responsibilities, therefore all sectors of the economy must do more, and agriculture is no exception.

We propose to achieve this win-win of simplification and environmental progress by **giving Member States greater autonomy** to design schemes that fit their climates and farming practices. The current one-size-fits-all system simply doesn’t deliver enough results.

This idea does not amount to a renationalisation of agriculture policy - far from it. The “common” in the **CAP will always remain**, because the policy is one of the great success stories of the European Union.

The Commission will develop smarter financial instruments to give farmers better access to much-needed credit. We will continue to drive innovation and research in the sector. And we will maintain support for rural entrepreneurship and business creation, not just in the agri-food sector but in a variety of other areas. Working with my Commissioner colleagues, the rollout of good quality broadband will be a priority to accelerate this potential.