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EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM TRADE UNIONS

What next after 2013?

The position of the European agricultural workers' unions on the planned Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform

The European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which was concluded in 1958 following significant contributions by European trade unions, is to be reformed. The trade unions want to play a part in directing these reforms, just as they have done consistently in the past.

Agriculture is evolving in Europe and the CAP must reflect this by promoting the changes that stakeholders want to see. Agriculture in Europe shall be redefined in line with a new model, which must take into consideration society's demands for high-quality diet, food safety, sustainable agriculture, better coordination with the food chain and development of rural areas. In connection with these demands, emphasis should be placed on subsectors like biomass, the use of residues, the development of forest-based industries and the promotion of aquaculture. The financial resources at the agriculture sector's disposal should be used in close association with the demands of European communities, to boost competitiveness and pave the way for better social cohesion.

European agricultural workers have been unable to escape the often dramatic effects of political reform decisions on their jobs and working conditions:

- The CAP is being inadequately implemented in new Member States and has failed to prevent the destruction of hundreds of thousands of jobs in these countries.
- Market organisation reforms – especially in the tobacco, banana, sugar, rice and cotton industries – have destroyed hundreds of thousands of agriculture jobs even in the original Member States.

Despite this, positive moves such as the Everything but Arms initiative should help to improve the living conditions of workers in developing countries.

We have noted that:

- although mechanisation and technological advances have engendered dramatic changes in agriculture in recent decades, the sector is still based on a traditional working model, which is leading to more precarious employment and discrimination in areas of social welfare;
- women and migrants, i.e. the most vulnerable workers, are affected by precarious employment and discrimination more than any other group;
- the CAP has perpetuated such social injustices by failing to consider workers as one of the policy's target groups.

For these reasons, agricultural trade unions are supporting and demanding CAP reform.



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Demands by the EFFAT Agriculture Sector

Agricultural trade unions in Europe are demanding:

1 Worker protection

- that agricultural workers be included in Article 33 of the Lisbon Treaty;
- that censuses be conducted and data collected in Member States to provide a more transparent view of the services and importance of agricultural workers;
- that a European employment observatory be set up within the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Agriculture;
- that European directives on health and safety at work be incorporated into the cross compliance instruments;
- that measures covering basic and further vocational training for workers be incorporated, enabling the CAP to better achieve its objectives;
- benefits for workers who have lost their jobs as a direct consequence of CAP reforms being implemented. Compensatory payments should be made not only to employers, but also to workers. To this end, smaller farms should try to find intercompany solutions;

2 Boosting employment

- better coordination between the CAP and other European policies, especially European employment policy, by monitoring the effect of CAP measures and instruments on employment together with sectoral social partners;
- that CAP payments be assessed for actual employment on those farms receiving more than a base payment. In future, decoupled agricultural subsidies should be linked not to changes in the number of hectares per farm but to changes in the number of workers per farm (farm owners and partners should be included as workers);
- that farms whose industrial relations contravene basic European standards be excluded from CAP payments;
- that sustainable and innovative jobs be promoted by the Rural Development policy;
- that new activities be promoted, especially those which play a direct role in improving the welfare of workers and rural populations, e.g. protecting biodiversity, preventing occupational hazards, enhancing the quality and stability of employment, improving social services, etc.;
- that sustainable approaches be mapped out to safeguard key activities, such as cattle farming and milk production, which have a significant impact on employment, land use and regional development.

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3 Supporting regions and regional development

The continued unequal treatment of new Member States vis-à-vis original Member States by CAP instruments must end. The EU has become more rural as it has expanded, but this expansion can no longer be managed at the expense of the new Member States. Without equal treatment, social cohesion is at risk in rural areas in many new Member States. Already, the European Commission has predicted the loss of over two million jobs in agriculture over the coming years in Bulgaria and Romania alone. This cannot be tolerated.

4 Protecting the environment

The social contributions made by agriculture should be recognised by society if they are not already rewarded as part of other services provided. This is particularly true for resource protection and biodiversity. However, any damage caused by agriculture should not be financially rewarded. New social demands such as climate protection must now be included in the reform.

5 More fairness

The CAP should make a lasting contribution to a fairer world. For instance, agricultural export subsidies should be abandoned immediately as they destroy agriculture jobs in many poor countries.

6 Boosting economic strength

European agriculture must be generally multifunctional, competitive and spread over a wide area, not only to protect vital rural areas, but also to make a substantial contribution to employment, the quality and safety of food, and the protection of the environment and animals.

Almeria, March 2010