

AER CONTRIBUTION TO THE EC CONSULTATION ON THE CAP AFTER 2013: SUMMARY

1. Why do we need a Common Agricultural Policy ?

The European Union needs a strong Common Agricultural Policy to:

- Ensure the sustainability and competitiveness of European agriculture
- Improve and guarantee food safety and quality (*cf 2*)
- Make sure the management of our rural landscapes answers current and upcoming challenges (rural exodus, environment...) (*cf 2*)

2. What are our society's objectives for agriculture in all its diversity?

Quality products are a growing sector and a trademark for the European Union, reflecting the diversity and know-how specific to our territory.

This sector needs a strengthened and simplified support from the EU.

Short circuits should be supported, as they are environmentally, economically and qualitatively sound.

The European Food Safety Agency should be reformed for more independence.

The environmental issue is complex and deserves a true European strategy that goes beyond the principle of conditionality.

Preserving natural resources (water, forests, biodiversity) and managing energy use should enable, through an apt relation between the CAP 2nd pillar and the 1st pillar as well as on all governance levels to give rural areas sustainable opportunities for development.

Partnerships between cities, peri-urban areas and more isolated locations are crucial.

The CAP's aim is to support lively rural areas and cannot be separated from the rural development policy.

3. Why should we reform the current CAP?

Farmers' incomes should be strongly linked with the quality of their work while continuity of revenues should be guaranteed as well. Support to farmers should be reviewed in its distribution, but not be stopped and be the result of a comprehensive approach including environmental and food security issues. It is essential to promote a fair and competitive agricultural sector with a focus on quality rather than quantity.

Agricultural products are subject to considerable speculation on **global markets** and most countries in the world strongly support their agriculture. The lack of exhaustive criteria at WTO level makes support for quality agriculture necessary.

Despite of past reforms the inclusion of **environmental issues** in the current CAP is not satisfactory.

4. What tools do we need for tomorrow's CAP?

Better governance is needed to bring the principles of territorial cohesion and multilevel governance into practice.

The responsibility of regions should be recognised, through increased responsibility in the definition and in the management of the CAP.

The diversity of the European agricultural landscape implies that the CAP has to be flexible. Territorial stakeholders need to be strengthened to convey the policy.

Peri-urban areas, and isolated rural areas, should be differentiated.

Better distribution of the budget is a priority to support the development of a whole part of Europe but the support can under no circumstances be lessened.

Better coordination with the competition and cohesion policies is essential. A second pillar should be maintained. Modulated financing through the reduction of subventions in the framework of the 1st pillar must go to the maintaining of services of general interest in rural areas and to innovative agricultural investments in the 2nd pillar.

Better coordination of the CAP with other European and national policies and harmonisation of economic policies is necessary to ensure the new CAP is fair and efficient for all Europeans

Control of the supply chain by an ad hoc tool on European level would stabilise this chain as well as the income of producers and consumer prices.

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

Rural development cannot be separated from the CAP, which objective is to support lively and prosperous rural areas rather than to serve as a crutch for almost fully deserted areas.

Socio-cultural protection of rural areas is also extremely important.

6. How can the management of the RD policy be improved?

The 2nd pillar of the CAP and Cohesion policy should be better coordinated but they are not interchangeable.

7. How can Rural development policy instruments be made more effective?

Increased flexibility is needed in the management of the programmes for rural development, to promote investments for the conversion to new sectors such as energy. Linkages must be created between funds to give way to comprehensive development strategies going beyond agriculture.

The LEADER methodology.

This methodology should be adaptable to different scales.

Support for innovative pilot-projects that are by definition risky is lacking in a sector that desperately needs innovation. As in the case of the Cohesion Policy, AER asks for the return of a financial tool dedicated to innovative territorial projects that are by definition risky.

