

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP): a lost opportunity to reform the European agricultural model towards a green economy?

The renegotiation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 is an ideal opportunity to move towards a sustainable future for Europe's rural areas and agricultural sectors. However, given the weak policies being proposed, it is unlikely that the budget can seek future legitimacy. Member states and the European Parliament have only one year to change course and address the environmental and social challenges of the 21st century.

Allan Buckwell, Senior Research Fellow, Agriculture and Land Management Programme at the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP)

Viviane Gravey, Research Fellow Agriculture and Climate Change at the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI)

Quentin Delachapelle, Farmer in the Champagne-Ardenne region and member of the board of FNCIVAM

Isabelle Laudon, Public Policy Coordinator of WWF France

Arnaud Gauffier, Sustainable Agriculture Programme Officer of WWF France

Head of the round table: **Xavier Poux**, Member of the Board of the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP), ASca

In her introductory presentation, **Viviane Gravey** explained that the concept of a green economy is more radical than that of green growth in which the environment is represented as an opportunity, whereas the green economy calls for transforming society. Agriculture represents a key sector in the green economy: it involves a wide diversity of environmental issues (climate, biodiversity, natural resources) as well as interaction between environmental and social excellence. International debate admits the necessity of a profound change within agriculture and at all stages of agricultural practice (agri-food industry, consumption).

Among the many different ways of implementing this transformation, there are two main contrasting models: the new green revolution versus agroecology. The European agricultural community is divided into two camps: industrial farmers with their polluting practices and the others who want productive agriculture, job creation and a low ecological footprint. **There are two possible change scenarios: incremental change (supporting all models without choosing) or radical.** What position does the CAP reform take? A driver of change or justification of the 'status quo'? Reinventing competitiveness around the environment or does the environment impact competitiveness?

In the 1960s the CAP was instrumental in modernising agriculture, in developing the agro-industrial sector, in stabilising markets and in ensuring the availability of supplies for consumers at affordable prices. However, at the same time there were serious problems with water quality, biodiversity and shrinkage of the agricultural workforce as small farms disappeared and others grew larger. For 20 years, Europe has taken an incremental route to reform the CAP by aiming: on the one hand to reduce negative impacts on agriculture and on the

other to produce amenities, with the help of instruments such as eco-conditionality and agri-environmental measures. **The shift from price support to income support decoupled from production led to eliminating overproduction and reducing waste.** However, the results of these reforms are not very good on several points: a decline of 300 million farmland birds over 30 years, 40% of land is in poor condition, and in France 96% of ground and surface water is contaminated by pesticides. According to **Quentin Delachapelle**, "the Champagne-Ardenne region is at risk of being known for its pesticides as Brittany is for its nitrates".

Viviane Gravey warned that if nitrate pollution stagnates in older EU States, it is much worse in the newer States where outbreaks of eutrophication can be expected. The Champagne-Ardenne region is symbolic of the success of the CAP in the 60s with much more intensive production via the agro-industrial sector, and at the same time it is a symbol of the CAP's failure with deteriorating water quality and rural desertification.

History has shown us that the link between growth and employment is not simple, and **Xavier Poux** warned that **jobs could be forgotten during green growth.** Xavier Poux concluded on the subject of the complexity of agricultural indicators: we cannot reason only in terms of resource efficiency, as is the case in other economic sectors, but must also take into account the production of environmental amenities (biodiversity, a living countryside, landscapes etc.) which correspond to a very strong social demand from European citizens.

This CAP reform will not lead agriculture towards a green economy. All agree that it seems to be a form of greenwashing because 'greening' serves to legitimise what already exists and will not lead European agriculture

towards increased sustainability and resilience. The Commission's proposals, which are not very ambitious but merit their existence, are gradually being dismantled during negotiations at the Council and the European Parliament (mainly the agricultural committee). **There is widely shared pessimism as to the outcome of negotiations. WWF has indicated that it will not support a move towards a CAP that represents 40% of EU budget unless it is re-legitimised.**

Allan Buckwell regrets that environmental NGOs supported the greening proposal in pillar 1, as in his opinion, in order to green the CAP it would have been better to reduce pillar 1 and increase pillar 2. It is pillar 2 that is presently at risk of budget cuts which would be detrimental as it provides support to farmers who make more efforts in support of the environment.

In order to lead an agricultural transition towards a green economy, Quentin Delachapelle explained that, instead of relying systematically on technical innovation, more effective measures could be used in pillar 2 such as the development of collective dynamics (researchers, farmer groups) which are necessary to manage complex ecosystems. However, bureaucratic constraints are hindering change: large projects take priority, policy assessment should be simplified and annualised, whereas priority should be given to local and micro projects such as Leader, with a move to multiannual assessment and a detailed analysis of the land.

Isabelle Laudon regretted that public policies, which should have a role in ensuring that agricultural models respond to the new challenges of the 21st century (ecological, energy, climate etc.), have not shifted in favour of sustainability at a European or national level: as illustrated by the announcement made at the French Environmental conference in September 2012 to abandon ambitious objectives for organic farming.

Faced with global demographic pressures and the need to intensify production, it should not be a case of relying on increased use of inputs, but of supporting 'ecological intensification' based on research, innovation and knowledge in order to develop low input farming. Certain speakers, **Arnaud Gauffier** and **Quentin Delachapelle**, do not think it is necessary to produce more in Europe: the most productive regions are not aiming to develop land for food, but for other purposes (biofuel, construction and textiles) while Europe's capacity to remain competitive in the face of emerging agricultural powers can only lead to even more intensive farming. While others, including **Alan Buckwell**, suggested that Europe should maintain or even increase production in order to reduce imports and, as a consequence, indirect land use. However, they were all in agreement that global demographic pressure should not legitimise a return to 'business as usual'.

Quentin Delachapelle mentioned that 80% of the billion malnourished on the planet are farmers: the problem is not so much the production, but more a problem of organisation and access to food. Several speakers think a change is needed in dietary habits,

especially in meat consumption. WWF underlined the unsustainable food system in France: according to its calculations, if everyone ate like a French person, all resources produced by the planet would be used up to meet global food needs. It was also discussed whether organic farming could rise to the productivity challenge. In its defence, **Isabelle Laudon** remarked that organic farming had not benefitted from 50 years of direct handouts from the CAP, nor from massive R&D investment that conventional farming has received for almost half a century to increase yields.

Nadège Chambon, Senior research fellow, Notre Europe

