



CEEweb for Biodiversity
Kuruclesi út 11/a, 1021 Budapest, Hungary
Phone: +36 1 398 0135
Fax: +36 1 398 0136
ceeweb@ceeweb.org
www.ceeweb.org

Question 1: Why do we need a European common agricultural policy?

- Europe needs the public goods produced by European farmers (food, land management, farming traditions, upkeeping agro-biodiversity, agro-tourism etc.). If there is no common agricultural policy, European farmers will probably quit farming because they are not competitive without the support schemes. If Europe needs to import basic agricultural goods, it means that we are losing one of our most important strategic sectors and our chance to become self-sufficient concerning food. If it happens we are not able to control any more food security and quality of food we are eating.

- Food is just one aspect of agriculture. Farmers play an important role in the protection of natural resources that we need (land, water, biodiversity). Farmers deserve money for the delivery of this kind of public goods. There is a social aspect as well: sustainable agriculture is labour intensive, it can help the unemployment situation of the EU.

Question 2: What do citizens expect from agriculture?

- First of all healthy, safe, tasty and varied food that is not only free from poisons but contains the necessary nutrients, vitamins and minerals. For producing this kind of food of high quality, a healthy soil and highest environmental and animal welfare standards are needed.

- Food for an affordable price

- Nice landscapes, healthy environment (clean ground water etc.). Mitigating and adapting to challenges arising from global climate change.

- Fair salary for farmers and an equitable trading system.

- European citizens expect that taxpayers' money is spent in an effective, efficient and transparent way.

- Jobs: in rural areas of Europe unemployment could be tackled by small scale labour intensive farming that would help the situation of big cities as well in this respect. Many young people expect a fair living standard from farming.

Question 3: Why reform the CAP?

- Getting EU funds for agriculture became a business (agri-business and not agri-culture), investors (and not farmers!) bought lands and they started to manage them intensively in order to access EU funds. Using big machines and a large amount of chemicals and fertilizers consumes a lot of energy, thus increasing the contribution of agriculture to climate change and pollution of the environment. The regular cutting of scrubs and trees from the previously abandoned fields, and unsustainable mowing makes the grassland and cornfield homogeneous and species-poor. The recent European Commission report COM/2009/0358 final confirmed that *"habitat types linked to agriculture generally have a worse conservation status compared for 'non-agricultural' habitats."* The report also confirms, that *"the abandonment of traditional management practices has resulted in a loss of biodiversity in some locations whereas in others the shift towards more intensive agricultural practices is the root of the problem."* The new CAP must help reverse this trend, because the loss of biodiversity can cause significant GDP loss in Europe in the long term.

At the same time, intensive agriculture provides employment to only very few local people due to the use of machines. So, the ownerships are not balanced and shared between local families, and the landscape is not that diverse any more.

- EU subsidies favour neither sustainable use nor community interests.
- The CAP must be modernised but the reform should not mean the complete abolishment of this common policy.

Question 4: What tools do we need for the CAP of tomorrow?

- First of all, subsidies that have a negative effect on the environment or the social dimension should be removed from the CAP
- More money for the second pillar of the CAP that is now approximately 20% of the agricultural budget. EU agricultural support should not be as area-based and uniform as it is now, but instead it should be more complex, supporting those schemes which are most adapted to the local circumstances, and the provision of a variety of ecosystem services. This means that in some cases, non-use of the area would be supported, e.g. if it provides water retention or other ecosystem service. We would welcome payments linked to supporting basic good practices with higher support to HNV systems and organic farming.
- We propose the extra support of gene banks in Europe, so that we can preserve agrobiodiversity. It is also important to increase the number of plant varieties produced on the fields.
- Concerning the land structure what we recommend is community property, which still works well e.g. in Romania. A local community (and not the state) owns the land surrounding them, and they cannot sell it to investors. What they can do is either to manage it to themselves or to let out the land, which also means a regular income for the community. Plot size would be maximized in 50 hectares.
- We need targeted investments in sustainable agriculture in rural communities threatened by abandonment.
- Administrative burdens of farmers should be decreased so that they can focus more on farming activities.

CEEweb for Biodiversity is a network of non-governmental organizations in the Central and Eastern European region. Our mission is the conservation of biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development.