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CEEweb contribution to the European Commission's Public consultation on the role of EU agriculture and forestry in achieving the EU's climate change commitments

CEEweb for Biodiversity¹ welcomes the opportunity to give input to the Public consultation on the role of EU agriculture and forestry in achieving the EU's climate change commitments.

In our understanding, emissions, degradation of natural ecosystems and excessive use of natural resources are equivalently important causes of climate change. Therefore, our suggestions for EU's domestic climate change policy are the following:

- CO₂ source and sink potentials of all categories of Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry activities (LULUCF) must be included into the aggregate anthropogenic CO₂-equivalent emissions on a compulsory basis.
- Considering the crucial role of large natural areas in the global biogeochemical cycles (including carbon cycle) as well as in natural adaptation to climate change, restoring a significant part of Europe's degraded ecosystems should get high priority in the climate agenda.
- Excessive use of renewable energy source (RES) can seriously endanger biodiversity and may eventually result in increased emissions, which is often the case with agrofuels. CEEweb therefore recommends introducing a 'biodiversity check' for all new RES initiatives.
- Besides setting ambitious emissions reduction targets, the EU's total demand for energy should also be limited and gradually decreased. If we focus only on emission cuts while letting the EU's demand for energy continuously grow, savings due to energy efficiency and growing share of renewables can easily be overgrown by the fast increase of needs (Jevons paradox).

Synergies with other EU policies:

- Protecting the biodiversity, the structure and organic carbon content of soils and aboveground vegetation is crucial for combating climate change, implementing biodiversity policies in EU and globally, and for feeding the growing world population as well. Therefore, we need to find convergence of interests between soil conservation, climate change, water management, food production, disaster mitigation and biodiversity

¹ CEEweb for Biodiversity is a network of 70 non-governmental organizations in the Central and Eastern European region. Our mission is the conservation of biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development.

conservation. Natural solutions supporting ecosystem services have been proven to bring multiple benefits and be extremely cost-effective at the same time.

- Costs of carbon sequestration as well as other soil services should be estimated (such as replacing lost services, benefits of society and reduction of costs achieved by maintaining healthy soil services) and included in agricultural economy by mainstreaming valuation of ecosystem services into land management. These costs need to be included in prices as well as in a reformed Common Agricultural Policy, removing current harmful subsidies.
- Research and innovation in alternative agricultural methods needs to be scaled up. Currently dominant intensive agriculture is not only harmful for below- and aboveground biodiversity and the climate, but, through its huge externalities, makes Europe vulnerable to future changes in supply of energy and natural resources. We should find alternative ways to satisfy European needs relying on its own natural resources (including soil capacity). There are very good local frameworks for sustainable agriculture and local market creation, which should be supported and combined with top-down initiatives.
- Climate policy needs to be part of a wider policy framework that will effectively tackle the underlying drivers behind climate change as well as biodiversity loss, define new parameters for growth, change unsustainable patterns of consumption and production and in the end support a transition process to a more sustainable economy which recognises and stays within the physical limits to growth.

Global responsibility

- EU delegates should adopt ecosystem-approach in upcoming international negotiations. Designed for climate change mitigation, REDD+ is a tool soon available for protecting organic carbon in ecosystems. Its budget will hopefully be scaled up according to the upcoming Cancun agreement, and can soon start to operate at large scale. However, the scope of REDD+ is restricted for tropical forests. It doesn't include belowground carbon stocks in natural grasslands, nor supports land use schemes which enhance soil carbon stocks in managed land. Besides widening the land use scope in the tropics, a more comprehensive scheme would also have wider geographical scope, considering the huge amount of carbon stored in temperate regions, especially in peatlands. If these were also included in a new international agreement, we would have a much more comprehensive instrument covering huge amounts of terrestrial carbon.
- The EU's responsibility for mitigating climate change and halting biodiversity loss at global level should be reflected in its trade policy, which, given the virtual pressure it involves, significantly contributes to climate change and global biodiversity loss

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