



Interparliamentary Conference “The Role of Parliaments in Shaping the Future of Food and Farming”

Croatian Parliament, Zagreb, 22/23 November 2018

Overview of session topics

On the first day of the Interparliamentary Conference the following topics were addressed in four sessions:

1. The process of adoption of CAP national strategic plans
2. Generational renewal
3. Local government and rural development
4. Research in agriculture, safety and quality of food

1. The process of adoption of CAP national strategic plans

The debate of the first session addressed possible consequences of imposing the obligation of drawing up national strategic plans in the form as proposed by the European Commission.

According to the debates:

The priority of CAP reform should be genuine simplification: the policy should be more comprehensible for farmers and simpler to implement in the future;

Increased flexibility for Member States was welcomed, but it was also pointed out that such flexibility should not lead to renationalisation of the Common Agricultural Policy;

Small and medium-sized farms should be at the heart of the policy and programming should be focused on meeting their needs;

Coupled payments and payments for areas with natural constraints should be retained, availability of funds for investment aid should be ensured;

Introducing new elements of conditionality with respect to climate and environment will place additional burden on farmers and administration; therefore, they should be voluntary for the Member States and sufficient funds should be provided to reduce the impact of the elements of conditionality on the competitiveness of the economies;

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Regardless of the challenges faced by the EU, the level of financing of the Common Agricultural Policy in the future should remain at least at the current level, especially given the importance of the agricultural community in world population nutrition, rural areas' sustainability and ecological contribution;

The diversification and finalization of agricultural production is the cornerstone of the sector's competitiveness, so the specific objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy should include objectives related to the processing of agricultural and food products and more clearly prescribe the objectives of forestry;

Agricultural holdings and their members, besides carrying out agricultural activities, are also rural guardians, and dealing with agriculture as a complementary activity, even when it makes only a small part of the total economic activity, provides them with the possibility of securing additional financial resources and retains them in rural areas; the definition of "real farmer" should also be considered in this aspect and allow for non-binding application;

Structural measures contribute to increasing the competitiveness of agriculture, so the budget reduction for rural development should be avoided;

The proposals on the external convergence of views are different and it is necessary to find an acceptable compromise;

The risk of delays in the adoption of the legal framework and, consequently, of national strategic plans, as well as postponement of the payment of subsidies to farmers after 2020, has been mentioned, and additional efforts are needed to avoid this scenario.

2. Generational renewal

The topic of the second Session referred to future measures to encourage young farmers.

The basic problems related to the generational renewal of rural areas are:

- Revenues that lag behind other sectors,
- Business risks that cannot be affected,
- Difficult access to land,
- Conditions related to creditworthiness,
- and unfair trade practices in the supply chain.

All these problems negatively affect the retention of young people in rural areas and decision-making on the continuation or beginning of dealing with agricultural production and hence the fulfilment of the desired aim of attracting young people to the agricultural sector.



With the aim of encouraging the retention of young people in rural areas and taking into account the average age of holders of agricultural holdings, the definition of a "young farmer" needs to be adjusted and it is not good to link it only with the holder of the agricultural holding.

It is important to ensure an appropriate level of funding to young farmers. In order to do so, besides the funds from the agricultural budget, we should take advantage of the synergy effect of other EU funds.

Measures of early retirement schemes for farm holders could stimulate the transfer of farms between two generations.

In relation to the measures foreseen in the European Commission's proposal, it has been accentuated that support for enterprise creation should be differentiated from income support to young people.

3. Local government and rural development

The third session discussed the role of regional and local authorities in implementing the rural development policy and the ways to improve it in the next financial period.

The following constraints were identified:

- administrative capacities at regional and local level;
- budget cuts for rural development measures;
- greater conditioning of support to additional ecological and climate goals.

The debate pointed to the problems facing individual regions in the Member States, and to the problems facing the Member States located at the external border of the Union, which could affect health safety.

The discussion highlighted the complexity of administrative requirements in the implementation of the LEADER initiative and it has been suggested to simplify them in the next programming period.

The participants expressed their support to the model of public-private partnership so as to provide additional financing sources.

4. Research in agriculture, quality and safety of food

At the fourth session the participants exchanged their opinions on the importance of research in agriculture and on the ways research can upgrade food quality and safety.

The increase in the budget for financing agricultural research in the next programming period was positively assessed.



The discussion pointed to the need of:

- stronger involvement of younger Member States in EU research programs;
- a stronger link between research and digitization in agriculture with agricultural production;
- training of experts and scientists with a view to developing more innovative systems and technologies.

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