

Brussels, 12 April 2010

The future of European agriculture policy Call for a public debate

The European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Dacian Cioloș, today launched a public debate on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the European Union. Since its creation, the CAP has always been adapted to respond to the challenges of its time. Significant reforms have been made in recent years, notably in 2003 and during the CAP health check in 2008, to modernise the sector and make it more market-oriented. The Europe 2020 strategy offers a new perspective. In this context, through its response to the new economic, social, environmental, climate-related and technological challenges facing our society, the CAP can contribute more to developing intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth. The CAP must also take greater account of the wealth and diversity of agriculture in the EU's 27 Member States. The debate launched relates to the CAP's future objectives in the new perspective of the Europe 2020 strategy. A discussion on funding will come later.

"The Common Agricultural Policy is not just a matter for experts. It's a policy for all Europeans. We must listen to the citizens of Europe. We must take the time to get the ideas and expectations of all stakeholders", said Mr Cioloș. "I want the reactions and thoughts not only of farmers, but also of environmental protection associations, consumers, and animal welfare groups. We must open this debate up as much as possible. All of society benefits from this common European policy through food, land-use management, and environmental protection. So obviously citizens should have the right and the time to express their views".

At the end of the year the European Commission will publish a Communication on the future of the CAP after 2013. But, before setting down any initial policy guidelines for this strategic sector, Commissioner Cioloș is launching a public debate on the Common Agricultural Policy's future, objectives, principles and contribution to the 'Europe 2020' strategy to inform the preparatory work for the decision-making process.

Mr Cioloș announced that a special website (<http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-debate>) has been created, which will be open for contributions to the public debate until June 2010. An independent body will then produce a summary of these contributions. In July 2010, the European Commission will organise a conclusive conference on the public debate. It hopes to draw strong ideas from this to develop its Communication on the CAP after 2013, which should be presented at the end of 2010.

In addition to how the CAP can contribute to developing the Europe 2020 strategy, the public debate will centre around four main topics:

- Why do we need a European Common Agricultural Policy?
- What are society's objectives for agriculture in all its diversity?
- Why should we reform the CAP and how can we make it meet society's expectations?
- What tools do we need for tomorrow's CAP?

In his speech to the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee (COMAGRI), Commissioner Ciolos also raised a series of more in-depth questions on the problems of food security in Europe and throughout the world, employment in rural areas, sustainable management of natural resources, climate change, price volatility, public understanding of the aid, fairness in the food chain and the competitiveness of European agriculture.

For more information:

<http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-debate> (from 17:00 this evening).