

European Parliament Intergroup

Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside ***“A Sustainable European Agriculture: Is Greening the Way Forward?”***

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, April 5, 2016 – The **Greening of Europe’s Common Agricultural Policy** is one of the most important elements in the fight to restore biodiversity and combat climate change. With the review of the **EU Biodiversity Strategy** and the **State of the Environment 2015** both showing that significant improvements need to be made to European agro- and forest biodiversity, the Greening component of direct payments are one of the best ways to create the necessary changes. However, many stakeholders have already voiced their opposition to the current implementation.

Today, the **European Parliament Intergroup on “Biodiversity, Hunting, and Countryside”** met to discuss the way forward for the greening of the CAP and the practical ways it can work for Europe’s biodiversity and land managers. At the conference, first insights from the ground were presented as well as a discussion towards the future with different stakeholders.

As the body representing the owners and managers of much of the European countryside, the European Landowners’ Organization (ELO) has a close and practical understanding of the CAP, as well as a long-standing commitment to environmental protection. The ELO therefore organised this event in order to have this extensive debate with MEPs and key stakeholders at this early stage of implementation, in order to make sure that the Europe’s land managers are headed the right way to protect agro- and forestry biodiversity.

The participants, speakers and delegates recognized that there are still steps to be taken in order to ensure that the greening does not fail. For farmers, this means ensuring that the greening is integrated properly with the business side of farming and allows a certain amount of flexibility. For nature protection NGOs, there are still questions of viability when it comes to the translation of European rules into national policies. What is needed now is more reliable data that can be trusted by all stakeholders, so that the greening can work efficiently and produce the needed results, both for farmers’ businesses and the environment.

MEP Karl-Heinz Florenz, President of the Intergroup, said *"Sustainable agriculture is more than 'greening' for me. But I also believe that the greening of European agriculture must not fail. We introduced the greening and now we should make the best out of it."*

Joost Korte, Deputy Director-General, European Commission, DG AGRI explained that *"The European policy to green the CAP support to farmers is an important step on the irreversible path towards sustainable European agriculture. The Commission is closely monitoring the application of the greening policy and stands ready to propose simplifications to enhance the effectiveness of the policy and reduce the administrative burden."*

Christopher Price, Director of Policy and Advice, Country Land and Business Association (CLA) *"we clearly need the CAP to work harder for biodiversity and the climate and to ensure that the benefits of the amount spent on the policy are clear to Europe's tax payers. The issue is how we get there. The current CAP is only a few a few months old, whilst we can all point to a couple of structural problems, it is far too early to carry out a comprehensive review of what works and what doesn't. Moreover, much of what could have been in the current CAP was watered down by the Council and the Parliament - it is difficult to see why any other ambitious proposals for reform wouldn't meet a similar fate. As such, the sensible thing to do is spend the next couple of years pulling together all the evidence we can on the impact of the new CAP whilst making sure Member State Governments and MEPs properly understand what farmers and landowners can do to help meet the various challenges we face."*

Faustine Bas-Defosse, Senior Policy Officer, Agriculture and Bioenergy EEB *"The CAP is supposedly greener and fairer than ever but increasing evidence on implementation shows that this is simply not the case and that greening is likely to fail. The European Commission can't ignore the truth any longer and must start asking the right questions. With 53 billion euros being pumped into our farming system every year, it is only fair that we as taxpayers are allowed to see just exactly how money is spent and whether it is efficient, effective in achieving the objectives such as the sustainable management of natural resources."*

Andrei Popescu, LAPAR (Romanian Farmer Association) *"In Romania, the greening process represents a cost of 24 euros per hectare. In order to help alleviate these costs, we would like to see areas neighbouring farm fields be considered eligible for greening as it represents a substantial contribution to the environment. Our association would like to see further Commission support for competitive and durable agriculture that takes into account specific national conditions."*

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About the Intergroup “Biodiversity, Hunting and Countryside” of the European Parliament

The Sustainable Hunting, Biodiversity, Countryside activities and Forestry Intergroup was created in 1985 and is one of the oldest and most active parliamentary platforms. It gathers MEPs from different political groups and various stakeholders promoting wildlife conservation, sustainable hunting and fishing, as well as the sustainable management of the countryside and cultural heritage.

The objectives of the Intergroup are to promote the role of hunting and other forms of sustainable use of wild species for biodiversity, wildlife management, rural development and forestry issues. Additionally, the Intergroup regularly focuses on cross cutting issues that affect socio-economic activities in rural areas and seek to build bridges between the civil society and decision makers.

In 2004, ELO (European Landowners’ Organization) joined the Intergroup as Co-Secretariat, bringing expertise in countryside-related topics.

About the ELO – European Landowners’ Organization

The European Landowners’ Organization is a unique federation of over 60 national associations from the 28 EU Member States and beyond, which represent the interests of landowners, land managers and rural entrepreneurs at the European political level. Independent and non-profit, the ELO stands for all rural entrepreneurs, promoting a prosperous countryside through the dynamism of private landownership and stewardship.