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CAP and Land use – What governance do we need to deliver it?

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From left to right: Delphine BABIN-PELLIARD, Jörg-Andreas KRÜGER, Dr Jurgen TACK, Barry COWEN, Ricard RAMON I SUMOY, Rose O'DONOVAN

The reform of the CAP – and the governance structures needed to deliver it – was the focus of the third panel. Five panellists offered sharply different but often complementary perspectives on what needs to change, and how fast.

A new direction of travel from the Commission

One of the key architects of the overhaul of the future CAP set out the direction of travel. “Simplification, less administrative burden for farming and for operators” were the goal, said Ricard Ramon I SUMOY, Head of Unit, Policy Perspectives at DG AGRI.

He described a shift away from top-down regulatory mechanisms from Brussels towards more bottom-up, market-based solutions with greater cooperation across the food chain. Flexibility is central: policies need to be able to adapt to a rapidly changing reality. Two-thirds of the actions promised in that vision, he said, are now being implemented.

“Ambition without funding will fail”

The ambition in the Commission’s proposals is real, but the budget proposed to deliver it is not: there is a 20% gap. That was the blunt assessment from Barry COWEN, Member of the European Parliament and Renew, Ireland. “How it can be delivered is dependent solely and totally on finance and on budget,” he said. “It’s as simple as that, and it’s as plain as that.”

“Innovation is the only answer”

Dr. Jurgen TACK, Secretary General of ELO, brought an unconventional visual aid: a ‘living graph’ of colleagues holding banners showing the changing division of land between nature, agriculture and urban areas over time. But producing

more on less called for innovation – something which is now stifled. “The only way we can cope with climate change, a growing population and environmental problems is innovation,” he said. Innovation sent Artemis II around the moon – and he called on policymakers to take their lead from that.

More of the same will not be enough

The ability of the new CAP to future-proof agriculture was also questioned by Jörg-Andreas KRÜGER, President of NABU. The CAP to date has not addressed agriculture as a primary driver of biodiversity loss in Europe and a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions. Nor has it dealt with deep structural distortions - unequal land access, global competition, labour cost differences or the steady loss of farm holdings. “We were surprised that the proposal is more of the same... not setting priorities on the protection of the environment and of the ecosystem services for the future.”

Competitiveness and nature are not in conflict

Delphine BABIN-PELLIARD, Senior Advisor for Food and Agricultural Systems at the IUCN, framed her contribution around “a false choice”. The debate is not environment versus competitiveness and food security - the question is how to secure Europe’s production systems for the next 10, 20 or 30 years. The answer is by investing in nature, she said.

“Competitiveness increases when nature is part of the system...and protecting nature is a long-term investment in food security and the economy,” she ended.

The discussion: governance in practice

Among the issues discussed was the proliferation of Commission initiatives: how would they be coordinated and work on the ground, asked Rose O'DONOVAN.