

CPE

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CPE Statement - EIPA- Maastricht – 14 May 2001 -
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“Agricultural practice and environmental problems in Europe from different perspectives – the quality of recent European policies and strategies.”

I thank you for your invitation .

The European Farmers Coordination represents today 17 farmers’ organisations from 11 countries in Europe, from the EU or outside. The CPE is based in Brussels.

We have been questioning the over-intensification of agriculture from 20 years.

BSE: never again: we want to change the agriculture policies in Europe.

My statement about agriculture practice, environment, policies and strategies will focus on following points:

- Intensive production still remains the model and receives great support from the CAP, with great damages for environment.
- During the last ten years, under pressure of public opinion , the CAP was just little greened, but not put on a sustainable way.
- Will the next CAP just add more green paint or can the next CAP stop the destructive industrialisation of food production and give priority to the interests of consumers, farmers, and environment ?

It is true that the EU has increasing concern about the damages caused by over-intensive farming. But it is also true that the EU never had the political will to stop over-intensive farming and to support sustainable family farming, even if the damages represent huge costs for the society.

Let us remember some examples:

A few days ago, the French State was condemned by a regional administration Court to pay more than 100.000 euro to the water company “Lyonnaise des Eaux” because the State did not forbid the extension of industrial pig production. Two years before, this company was condemned to refund the costs for mineral water of local consumers who claimed against the company, who was unable to distribute water respecting the EU standards for nitrates; the water company decided to claim against the State. The nitrate directive is not respected in many EU countries.

Web site : www.cpefarmers.org

Water pollution, groundwater pollution by pesticides and nitrates is probably the most important issue on the middle and long term respecting agriculture/environment. There is few research about the effects of pesticides cocktails on human health, far less research as about useless GMOs.

We cannot accept as farmers, as citizens, as taxpayers, as consumers that, in order to produce more grain surpluses, at decreasing prices, to be exported with public funds, with often damaging effects on the grain production in the importing countries, we cannot accept that groundwater is polluted for the next generations.

Do you have an idea what it would cost to clean groundwater from dangerous pesticides ?

Why farmers have interest to irrigate wheat in France? As far I know, they are not in Qatar ! Why Spanish farmers or companies have the right to pump water at several hundred meters deep to produce over-intensive vegetables, or to irrigate golf places ? This water is lost for many thousand years.

Why the CAP in 1992, why the Agenda 2000 still favours, with public funds, the production of maize for silage, but does not support grass areas ? I do not need here to explain the environmental damages of such a policy.

In terms of energy, the over-intensive farming is burning more energy than it produces through the sun: however the fundamental aim of agriculture is to put the sun's energy into the food chain: so we are facing a total no-sense for the environment !

The next question comes naturally: why the EU continues such no-sense ?

Because the financial benefits of over-intensive farming and the costs of the damages are not concerning the same groups:

- taxpayers and consumers pay for water;
- Dreyfus, Cargill, Danone,... make money by buying/exporting cheap grain/milk/....

We cannot discuss the environmental effects of agriculture without questioning the sense and the priorities of the CAP.

There could not be any serious economy if we do not take in account the negative externalities of over-intensive farming.

So I come to my second point:

Did the recent European policies move agriculture on a more sustainable way ?

yes and no.

Yes if you look at the environmental instruments in the CAP 1992 and Agenda 2000: it was explained already this morning, with all its contradictions. They are probably like a sustainable cherry on a very indigestible cake for the environment.

But no if you look at the roots of the problems.

The CAP is like a train: in 1992 and 2000 the train was paint partly in green, but the direction of the rails was not changed: and the direction is clearly to produce raw agricultural products as cheap as possible for the agro-industry, supermarkets, and international trade companies. That is the objective of the Blair House and the WTO agreements, which have determined the last two CAP reforms.

To force farmers to reduce the production costs by decreasing prices is not a good policy for the environment: the debate on agricultural prices should be put at the heart of the discussion about the CAP.

The animal feedstuffs policy is probably the central point, the perverse policy since 1962: it is the main cause of distortions and damages on environmental, budget, quality level.

In fact from 1962 the EU has been importing, free of tax, about 60 millions tons of animal feedstuffs from all over the world, each year. We got the WTO for feedstuffs already 40 years ago !

Due to this rule in favour of feedstuff trade companies, the production of meat, milk, and eggs moved from their natural/historical regions to the coast, near big harbours , based on imported feedstuffs.

Now a few regions in Europe (South Holland/ Rotterdam, North Belgium/ Antwerpen, Low Saxony/Hamburg-Bremen, Brittany/Brest-Lorient, Po Valley/Ravenna, Catalunya/Taragonna, Danemark,..) concentrate the animal production, with huge environmental problems.

Europe, for a great part, is not producing animal products, it processes imported feedstuffs, without giving the manure back to the regions where the feedstuffs come from.

This policy was and remains the main reason for milk, beef, pork surpluses, but also for grain surpluses because our animals are feeded cheaper with imported feedstuffs as with European grain.

Is it a hazard that the BSE scandal, the dioxin scandal are feedstuffs scandals ?

In this central point of the CAP, the environmental effects are due to the external part the CAP, to the present rules of trade, which is determining all the rest.

In short words for my second point, the CAP has still to question the heart of the problems and not to paint the train again.

And now what are the perspectives ? What's with next CAP ?

If you have listened to some Ministers of agriculture during the last months, for ex Mr Pecorario (I), Mss Künast (D), Mss Wynberg (S), Mr Glavany (F), it seems that “times, they are changing”, that “productivism” has no future any more.....

The pressures to change the CAP are growing, but from different directions.

Would be the next step a new green colour for the train, with Monsanto, Cargill, Danone, Aldi, Carrefour in the locomotive ?

The strange alliance between corporations and environment could be the next illusion for the citizens, till the next tick bomb explodes (as BSE did in 1996): this could be the case with pesticides or antibiotics. If you listen precisely to these Ministers, they question productivism, but all agree with the WTO and its green box: no prices for farmers, but payments from the taxpayers with cross compliance: the EU dumping remains against third countries.

To sell this strategy on international level, the EU developed the concept of multi-functionality, which naturally failed to be accepted in Seattle, especially from Southern countries: the EU will have support on this in Europe and outside Europe only if it changes direct and indirect dumping practices at world level; the green box belongs to dumping practices.

The EU should be careful by using on an unfair way the word multi-functionality, because it would be easy to list all the negative functions of over-intensive farming.

CPE proposes to turn the CAP really on a sustainable way by changing the priorities of the CAP: instead of export, so called competitiveness on the international market, we propose to give priority to the production of food for the internal European market.

Our proposal has several basic fields to be applied together

1) prices- external aspects

If the European consumers want that basic food should be produced in Europe, for food sovereignty and quality reasons, then it should be easily understood that a farmer producing in favoured areas can sell his products at a price which covers his production costs, including his work.

For that it is necessary to forbid dumping on import, to have import tariffs (CPE never agreed the inclusion of agriculture in WTO) , and the same tariffs for grains and for all feedstuffs. If the citizens want to maintain farmers in less favoured areas, for environmental and non trade concerns, the farmers , which have higher production costs there, should receive price complements from the CAP budget, with a clear modulation in favour of family farms and cross compliance in favour of the environment. To simplify , these complements are grouped in one unique tiered payment per farm, taking in account the different productions. It means that the most important part of farmer's income comes from the sale of the farm's products: Isn't an evidence ? It is a necessary condition for the social recognition of farmers. Naturally, to stop EU direct dumping, the export subsidies disappear.

2) Supply management, des-intensification, quality, food safety,..

To avoid possible surpluses (which point 1 will strongly reduce) and to stop over-intensification, we need supply management measures and des-intensification measures: Mandatory des-intensification measures (with support to help the adaptation of small over-intensive farms, and transition period for the big over-intensive farms)

- # prohibition of the straw growing shorters (hormones for grain),
- # link between breeding and soil: progressive withdrawal of industrial animal production no linked with the soil of the farm, prohibition of every public fund to manure processing plants,
- # strict application of the nitrate directive (directive to be reviewed in favour of the environment),
- # prohibition of antibiotic in feedstuffs,
- # training, research oriented in favour of sustainable family farming,
- # encouragement of the farms to consume less inputs, to practice the rotation of cultures, to replace maize in Northern Europe by mixing grass and leguminous,
- # to limit the support to irrigation to dry regions, when the groundwater is not in danger, and to limit it to cultures which naturally need irrigation
- # to stop public funds for « drainage »,
- # to support the farms which respect higher environmental standards to preserve biodiversity,
- # breeding standards for animal welfare (prohibition of battery hens , limitation of long transport)
- # specific support for the production of proteaginous on breeding farms ,

Supply management instruments are necessary to avoid, even with des-intensification and modulation, possible surpluses, especially for animal production ,grain , fruit trees, wine, olive oil.

Quality, safety

- general prohibition for growing or importing GMOs,

- BSE : total prohibition of using animal meals as feedstuffs – use for non-food purposes ,
- to replace many quality standards , which in fact are standards for the agro-industry or retailing sector by standards respecting the interests of consumers,
- positive list of all products which can be used in feedstuffs, with full labelling for the products and their origin,
- *penal and financial responsibility of the agro-industry for the consequences of their industrial practices on human and animal health and on the environment.*

3. international trade

- Withdrawal of the Blair House agreement, of decoupling between production and income, of the green, yellow, blue boxes of WTO.
- stop of all dumping direct and indirect instruments : it brings better negotiation conditions
- WTO out of agriculture and food,
- limitation of trade negotiations (at UNCTAD ?) to the establishment of fair trade rules : the definition of agriculture and food policies should remain on national/regional level .

To conclude, I would like to tell you a short story: my “strawberry” story.

In Belgium, there is some strawberry production, where an important part of the workers who collect the strawberries is coming from Poland, paid black or not.

If you go to Warszawa, around the town, you find vegetables farms, which grow also strawberries: these farms are just living because their workers are paid black: they come from Ukraine.

Polish people collect strawberries in Belgium, Ukrainian people collect strawberries in Poland.

Next question

Who is collecting the strawberries in Ukraine ?