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Farmers & Agri-Cooperatives

Interviews

with Copa and Cogeca Presidents, Commissioner Hogan, MEP de Castro, Ceja on the #FutureofCAP, #Brexit views, #fairfoodchain, tackling climate change, Estonian Presidency priorities, #birdflu, trade and more....



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◆ *Future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funds must be sufficient to fulfill its goals, Estonian Minister Tamm says*

The EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) must be central to EU policy and funding for it be sufficient to fulfill its goals, Estonian Minister of Rural Affairs Tarmo Tamm told Copa and Cogeca in an exclusive interview.

Outlining priorities on agriculture over the next 6 months under the Estonian Presidency, Minister Tamm told Copa and Cogeca that making progress on the future CAP is a top priority. The Presidency will put focus on simplification of the CAP largely in the context of the Omnibus regulation. “Everything will be looked at with a view to simplifying rules. Competitiveness and sustainability are also important. We have to guarantee that we can compete within the EU and on external markets. Further convergence of direct payments under the CAP between Member States is also key to ensure a level playing field”, he insisted.

Ministers confirmed too at their July meeting that a CAP is needed in the future and it needs to be modernized and simplified. Cutting the excessive bureaucracy under the CAP is a top priority for Copa and Cogeca.

Mr Tamm went on to underline his serious concerns about Brexit which is estimated to cause a 10-13 billion euros budget shortfall, saying that “everyone is worried about the impact of Brexit on CAP funding”. “With the new challenges of climate change and market volatility, we need to make sure that CAP funding is sufficient to address the challenges ahead. The CAP is one of the few common policies and it must remain so”, he insisted.

The Estonian Informal Agricultural Ministers meeting on September 3-5 focused on the future CAP and risk management. The discussion paper presented at the meeting looked at price volatility and the need for more robust risk management tools, raising questions on whether direct payments are an effective risk management tool. For Copa and Cogeca, they are. The Presidency will also closely monitor the agricultural market situation.

Other priorities include the sustainable use of agricultural soils, with a high-level conference on this on October 4-6 in Tallinn “Soils for sustainable food production and ecosystem services”.



But Minister Tamm confirmed that he does not plan to re-open talks on the blocked EU soil directive. Priorities also involve making progress on the EU Commission Action Plan to tackle antimicrobial resistance with a high-level meeting scheduled on this in November.

With the digital agenda high on the Presidency’s list, Estonia will have a high-level conference on digitalising the official controls under the CAP as well as a Conference on September 29 on how to make Europe more digital.





► Securing good deal on future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and EU budget for farmers top priority for new Copa President

With climate change and increasingly open markets, securing a good deal on the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the EU budget for farmers is a top priority for me over the next two years, new President Joachim Rukwied of the European Farmers Organisation Copa said in Brussels after his election.

“We have just agreed our position on the future CAP at Copa and I will work hard to make sure that EU decision-makers take our views on board”, he said.

“It is important that farmers are able to compete, when faced with climate change, more open and volatile markets. They respect tough animal welfare and environmental standards which are not paid for by society. In my own country Germany, we have just launched a study showing the extra costs of European environmental standards and additional regulations on German agriculture. The study by Helmut Karl and Steffen Noleppa from HFFA Research GmbH estimates these costs to reach 28, 000 euros per year for an average family farm or 367 euros/hectare of agricultural land. Costs and services which are not paid for by the market. I do not want to lower our standards. But European farmers must get compensation for them. No other country outside the EU has banned plant protection products (PPPs) like neonicotinoid seed treatments for example or have such burdensome “greening” measures”, he stressed.

“We need a strong, competitive CAP in the future, with common and simple rules across the EU. It is important to keep direct payments at current levels in the first pillar of the CAP as this helps farmers to better manage income risks. There must be no co-financing of support in the first pillar. Market safety nets must also be maintained and further developed. Focus needs to be put on measures to help farmers better manage market risks with the development of futures markets to cope with the increasing market volatility. The risk management measures must remain voluntary for producers to apply and remain in the second pillar of the CAP. We need to see this reflected in the Commissions Communication on the CAP which could be released at the end of November”, he insisted.

“For me, as a farmer, it is also very important that we use new technologies like smart farming to produce efficiently using less resources and that rural areas have the right infrastructures in place including broadband to assure this. *Farmers also need a good toolbox at their disposal and it's vital that the commonly used weed killer glyphosate is re-authorised for 15 years after both the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) gave it a positive assessment”, he said.*

“Farmers positioning in the food chain needs to be improved too. I welcome EU Agriculture Commissioner Hogan’s work here and I look forward to seeing concrete proposals in 2018 to eliminate Unfair Trade Practices in the food chain. We need legislation to curb UTPs since the voluntary approaches haven’t worked”, he added.

“I will also be seeking fair and balanced trade agreements. We have serious concerns about the current trade deals being negotiated with the EU Latin American Trade Bloc Mercosur as well as with Australia and New Zealand. I will push to make sure that I get a good deal for European farmers and that agriculture is not used as bargaining chip in the talks”, he claimed.

“A top priority is also to secure a strong budget in the future when the next Multiannual Financing Framework (MFF) is presented in May next year. Brexit is on everyone’s lips. It will be important to minimise any disruption to trade and to fill the 10.3 billion euros shortfall caused by the exit of the UK from the EU. Farmers must not pay the price of Brexit. Member States need to increase their contributions to the budget. Europe has new challenges and we need new money to fund these. Rural areas make up 70% of the area in the EU and without a stable countryside, Europe will be de-stabilised”, he warned.

Joachim Rukwied is President of the German Farm Organisation DBV and he runs a 295 hectare arable crop farm, producing grain, sugar beet, oilseed rape and field vegetables. He is also a wine grower. He will be supported by six Vice-Presidents. These include Joe Healy from the Irish Farmers Association (IFA); Marian Sikora from the Polish Federation of Agricultural Producers; Henri Brichart (FNSEA); Roberto Moncalvo from the Italian Farmers’ Union Coldiretti; Martin Merrild from the Danish Agriculture and Food Council; Franz Reisecker from the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture (LKO).

Key challenges facing EU agricultural cooperatives: Brexit, Mercosur trade talks, making sure future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) delivers



Key challenges facing EU agricultural cooperatives in the future are upcoming trade deals - especially Brexit and Mercosur- and ensuring that the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) delivers, President of the European Agri-Cooperative Organisation Thomas Magnusson said in an interview.

Talking from his office in Sweden, Mr Magnusson said "It is important for cooperatives to ensure that we have balanced trade agreements in the future. We have just secured a political agreement on a trade deal between the EU and Japan which we believe will have a beneficial impact in particular on the EU livestock and wine sectors. Next step will be to ensure that it is properly implemented".

"A key challenge facing cooperatives is also the exit of the UK from the EU. The UK is a strong trade partner for us - with 70-99% of all UK agricultural imports originating from the EU - and it will be important in the future to ensure that we have a good chance to continue exporting our quality produce to the UK market."

We favour trade and above all fair trade. Farmers and their cooperatives on both sides of the channel must not have to bear the brunt of Brexit".

"Ireland, for example, exports 52% of its beef to the UK and 37% of its total agri-food exports. Danish pork exports to the UK are important too, fruit and vegetables for other Member States as well as forestry. The EU exports over 50% of its timber produce to UK. If Ireland can no longer export to the UK, it would be a disaster for the whole of the EU as the EU market would become saturated with excess beef supplies. But the final outcome will also depend on other factors. The UK government must honour its financial commitments to the EU budget also beyond 2020. It will cost them to leave the EU and this needs to be respected", he warned.

"Another challenge is the current trade deals being negotiated with the EU Latin American Trade Bloc Mercosur as well as with Australia and New Zealand. We have some serious concerns here. It will be important to ensure that these countries respect our high production standards and that our more sensitive sectors are safeguarded", he warned.

"The EU's failure to re-authorise the most commonly used herbicide active substance glyphosate in the world for 15 years after it was declared safe by EU scientists is a major concern too."

Its use is vital to secure our food supplies and to secure our competitiveness vis a vis non EU countries where it is widely used. Farmers in my own country Sweden and in the Lantmännen cooperative are very angry about what has been happening in Brussels and how they are being treated by politicians", he added.

"An important challenge will also be to ensure that the future CAP delivers for both farmers and cooperatives alike."

They need to have a stable situation and security in producing food for a growing population. We need a strong CAP in the future, with common and simple rules across the EU, and a good budget behind it. Solutions need to be found to help farmers better manage risk but these measures need to remain in the second pillar of the CAP", he insisted.

"We do not need big changes at this stage as farmers and their cooperatives are still getting to grips with the last reform. They have invested a lot. We can't keep changing the system every 4-5 years. We need to keep direct payments in the first pillar of the CAP at current levels as this helps to stabilize their incomes. The CAP also provides consumers with affordable, quality food supplies. 12% of Swedish consumers incomes, for example, are now spent on food whilst before we joined the EU, it reached as much as 35%. Society needs to be made aware of this. Farmers respect very high welfare and environmental standards and consumers need to pay for these", he added.

"Finally, we need to continue measures under the CAP to encourage farmers to join cooperatives as this can improve farmers positioning in the food chain."

Cooperatives help farmers to market their produce, better handle their risk and give them advice on how best to sell grain on the market. The agricultural situation is often better for farmers, for example, in countries like Denmark, Sweden, Netherlands where the presence of cooperatives is strong", he concluded. Mr Magnusson is from the Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF) and farms a mixed dairy farm with forestry in Sweden and is a member and board member of Lantmännen cooperative group.



► MEP Paolo de Castro outlines vision of future of agriculture

An agreement struck during the trilogues between MEPs and the EU Council on rules to simplify EU agricultural policy, boost farmers' bargaining power and improve insurance schemes to compensate farmers for losses was welcomed by lead MEP Paolo de Castro in October.

Thanks to European Parliament's ambitious position, we have managed to use this proposal on the EU Omnibus Regulation to respond to various difficulties our farmers have been facing. Most of Parliament's ideas on simplification, risk management and market measures are now included in the final text", said the head of the Agriculture Committee negotiators Italian MEP Paolo de Castro from the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) Group in European Parliament.

"Our farmers will have better tools now to respond to market volatility and environmental risks and to strengthen their position in the food chain. This will make EU's farming policy fairer and simpler, better tailored to farmers' needs and thus able to live up to consumers' expectations", he added.

Copa and Cogeca Secretary-General Pekka Pesonen thanked Mr de Castro for his work in a statement in achieving this positive outcome, saying that it is good news that rules will be improved on insurance to compensate farmers for their losses.

The proposed changes to the income stabilisation tool (IST) in the EU Omnibus Regulation will enable aid to be activated on a sector basis when income losses reach 20% instead of 30% which is an improved situation for farmers.

"This is important as we need to improve uptake of the scheme in the second pillar of the CAP and better target support. We have pushed to ensure that compensation will be increased to 70% from 65% for those who lost more than 20% of their annual production or income", Mr de Castro added.

Looking to the future CAP, he underlined the need for it to be strong, competitive and capable of meeting social needs. "We need to have common rules across the EU and must avoid any kind of renationalization of the CAP.

We also need to give farmers effective tools to manage the crises we have seen recently.

At the moment, we are asking a lot of farmers and imposing a lot of administration on them.

We need to change this philosophy. Rules need to be simpler. We need to give farmers incentives to meet the high environmental and welfare standards that they meet, not penalties. Farmers should receive a flat rate basic payment. But if they do more, they should be rewarded for this", he told Copa and Cogeca in an exclusive interview.

"Environmental measures work better in the second pillar of the CAP under rural development policy than the greening measures in the first pillar. We need to reflect and find the correct way to incentivize environmentally-friendly practices. It will also be important in the future to put more focus on risk management measures. They could be put in the first pillar of the CAP in future but it's important now to improve uptake of the scheme and to see how it works", he added.

« Innovation and new technologies will also be important. We need to encourage smart farming so that farmers can produce more using less resources.

It's also important to maintain trust in our EU Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and Chemicals Agency (ECHA). EU scientists said using the herbicide active substance glyphosate is safe and we should trust their advice. It should be re-authorized", he insisted.

"Farmers also need to be encouraged to join producer organisations like cooperatives to get a better return for their produce and to take advantage of the market opportunities. We need trade and we need exports to maintain a healthy agriculture sector", he added.

Finally, the future CAP needs a strong budget behind it. « We will have a new policy and it will be important to have new money to fund it.

Farmers should not have to pay the costs of Brexit or of the migrant crisis. There is a positive future for farmers as the world needs food », he concluded.

► Copa and Cogeca step up talks with farm unions across world, sharing similar challenges

Copa and Cogeca met with our North American counterparts at a Summit in Washington this Autumn to debate agricultural policy, trade, technology, and found that we shared many similar challenges, Copa and Cogeca Secretary-General Pekka Pesonen said.

High-level meetings took place as well as farm visits and interviews with key media. Participants from across the world underlined the common challenges facing farmers and their cooperatives. These include the low prices for many agricultural commodities and the cost price squeeze as well as the need to cut red tape. Concerns were underlined too about the extreme weather events and the increasingly volatile markets. They drew attention to the need for innovation and access to new technology to stay competitive. They also highlighted the need to improve farmers positioning in the food chain and the importance of cooperatives to help farmers do this. The need for #fairtrade was highlighted by many with the focus now on the North American Free Trade talks (NAFTA), with a deal needed by early next year, even if it is looking increasingly challenging, he said.

Agricultural policy developments were discussed too including the new U.S. Farm Bill where only slight changes are expected to the dairy and cotton regimes. With increasing weather events, crop insurance is valued highly by U.S. farmers under the Farm Bill.

They were optimistic that it will be wrapped by the end of the year. But like European farm unions, our American counterparts were worried about where the money would be found to fund it. They were also worried about generation renewal and the need to get new blood back into the sector. The lack of farm labour in the U.S. was underlined, with not enough people wanting to do the work anymore, indicating the need for a change in immigration policy, participants said.

In Europe, we called for a stable, simple, sustainable and competitive future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the future, with a good budget behind it.



This comes in the run up to a Commission Communication on this expected at the end of November, he stressed.

We are stepping up communication with farm unions across the world, finding areas where we can collaborate further, meeting too with the farm unions in Ukraine.

We will also continue to fight against agriculture being used a bargaining chip in political disputes and regret that the Russian Federation extended its political ban on EU agricultural exports to 2018 and included EU pork exports, fats and lard.

We are disappointed to have lost a good client for our quality produce but welcome the fact that the EU Commission has been active in finding new markets for our quality produce and it is continuing to step up its action and boost promotion measures, he insisted.

We welcome in particular the recent agri-trade missions organised by EU Agriculture Commissioner Hogan to countries outside the EU like Hong Kong, Vietnam, Japan, Mexico, Indonesia, the Gulf as it offers our members a good opportunity to develop new markets and to meet traders and high-level officials. We are already starting to see some results from them. We hope this will continue, he concluded.

The logo for Global Fertilizer Day features a green circular emblem with a globe in the center. The text "13 OCTOBER" is at the top, "GLOBAL FERTILIZER DAY" is across the middle, and "GROW. FOOD. LIFE." is at the bottom. The background of the entire page is a blurred image of fresh produce, including green apples and red tomatoes, with a green circular graphic at the top.

GLOBAL FERTILIZER DAY 13 October 2017

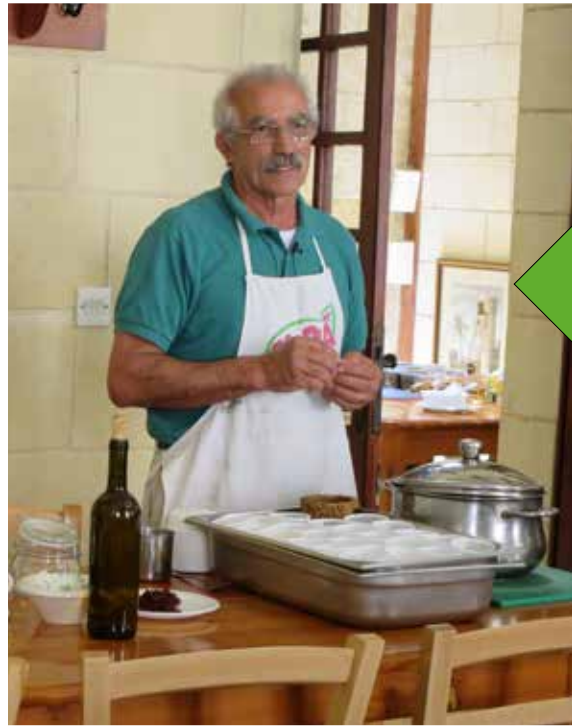
“Two out of every five
people owe their lives to
fertilizer.” - Bill Gates

Fertilizers are fundamental to our food supply. In 1960s, one hectare of land fed two people. By 2025, we know that one hectare of land will need to feed five.

Growing sufficient food for a growing population on limited resources can only be done through intelligent use of fertilizer and investment in developing innovative agricultural technologies.

On 13 October, the agriculture industry unites to celebrate Global Fertilizer Day to raise awareness of fertilizer as one of the most important inventions of our time - feeding billions, reducing poverty, and offering the key to sustaining the global population into the future.

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Excess paperwork under CAP and lack of access to land underlined by Maltese farmer and restaurant owner

During a press visit to a Maltese farmers' restaurant Ta' Rikardu, the producer lamented about the excess paperwork under the Common Agricultural policy (CAP) and the lack of access to land, warning that without improvements his children would not take over his farm.

The innovative Maltese farmer is both a sheep and goat farmer and wine grower at the same time as owning a restaurant Ta' Rikardu which uses cheese and wine from his farm. He farms 200 sheep and goats and has a small vineyard to supply his restaurant with wine.

"I survived as a farmer as I add value to my produce and use it to supply my restaurant", he explained. At the restaurant in Cittadella, he gave a demonstration of

how to make sheep cheese from the milk as well as great pasta filled with the cheese. But he warned of the excess paperwork and lack of access to land. He will continue with his restaurant in the future but he doubts that his children will want to take over the farm as there is too much paperwork and it is hard to live off the land.

"More and more farmers are leaving the sector and going to more lucrative sectors like financial services and tourism. A lot of farmers are becoming part time too and reducing their sheep numbers down to as few as 4 to avoid paperwork and excess regulation, he stressed. He also warned that aid under the CAP is limited for him as it is paid per hectare and not per animal and fertile land is scarce in Malta.

There are currently 4000 part time farmers and 900 full time farmers in Malta and farms tend to be small and fragmented often only 1 ha. The government consequently wants to encourage farmers to organise themselves better and to belong to cooperatives to help market their produce and to get a better price for it. Together, with Copa and Cogeca, Ministers, the EU Commission, a top priority for them is also to simplify rules under the CAP.

The press visit, organised by the Maltese government, also included visits to a dairy cooperative, vineyards and olive groves. The dairy cooperative Benna supplies the whole of Malta with fresh milk, using milk from 66 farms in Malta and 33 in Gozo, and gives producers a good price of 58 cents/litre and sells at 80-85 cents per litre. The good price paid to producers is because farmers are key stakeholders in the plant, showing the benefits for producers of belonging to cooperatives.



This enabled them to largely avoid the recent dairy crisis felt by many across Europe. They are also working hard to further develop other dairy products like cheese.

Other important agriculture sectors in Malta are honey, wine, and olive oil as it is a good climate for these products. In Roman times, much of Malta's economy was based on selling olive oil. But the product got gradually phased out until more recently.

Starting his own olive garden and being the first man to buy a functional olive press in 2002, Sammy Cremona began his quest to revive the production of the "Bidni" olive. The olive, which has a distinctive pointed and curved stone, is an indigenous species packed with anti-oxidants that has been around for at least 2000 years but had nearly become extinct. Today, this estate produces up to 20 tonnes of oil in one season. During the visit, the distinctive taste of this premium olive oil produced on the estate was discovered.





Head of EU Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan's Cabinet Peter Power talks on Future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

• What are the key challenges facing farmers at the moment?

Farmers face new and emerging challenges every day. Having experienced a very difficult period in the immediate aftermath of the Russian ban, we have seen a slow, but steady recovery in the market situation. All of us appreciate that this recovery has been fragile and, together, we face a particular challenge to sustain that recovery and ensure that prices are maintained at a level that guarantees a fair income to farmers. We have also seen how increasingly frequent extreme weather events are affecting agricultural production throughout Europe, whether that was forest fires in Portugal, drought in central Europe or flooding in the Baltics not seen for generations. Climate change presents a challenge to society as a whole and to farmers in particular. We have to improve the resilience of farmers and to provide them with the necessary tools to combat the challenges of market volatility and climate change. We have to maintain farming as a profession into which young people are attracted, not just to ensure food production, but to maintain our rural communities and a way of life that is intrinsically European. In the words of President Juncker in last year's State of the Union speech – *"a strong part of our European way of life that I want to preserve is our agricultural sector."* That, in itself, is a defining challenge for all of us and one in which we will succeed only if we work together.

• Why is the CAP important to help farmers meet these challenges?

This year, the European Union celebrates 60 years of existence and, over those 60 years, the Common Agricultural Policy has been its most successful policy. Post-war Europe was ravaged by hunger and destruction and, from the ashes of post-war Europe, has risen a Community which is now the largest agricultural trading entity in the world. The CAP has developed and evolved over the last half-century to meet new and emerging challenges and must continue to do so into the future. But today, direct payments make up around 46 per cent of the income of the EU farming community, though the proportion is much higher in many regions and sectors. Moreover, Rural Development Policy makes a substantial contribution to the farm economy and vital rural livelihoods in various ways.

The Commission is now preparing a Communication on the "Simplification and Modernisation" of the CAP, which will be adopted at the end of November. This Communication will chart a future in which the CAP will contribute to fostering greater resilience, increasing environmental ambition and climate action and strengthening our rural areas and communities. Just as it has for decades, the CAP will continue its evolution to meet the new and emerging challenges with which farmers are faced every day.

• How do you see the future CAP evolving?

The important thing about the forthcoming Communication on the CAP is that it represents evolution, not revolution. It is clear from

the extensive public consultation undertaken earlier this year that this is what farmers want. Yes, it is important that the policy evolves to meet new challenges and to address shortcomings that are identified, but farmers, other beneficiaries and the wider stakeholder community also need some sort of policy stability. Farmers are, first and foremost, businesspeople who have critical investment decisions to make in the areas of production and environmental care. These decisions cannot be taken against a backdrop of an ever-changing regulatory or financial environment. Over the last three years, the Commission has made very significant strides in simplifying the CAP, to the benefit of beneficiaries and managing authorities alike. The next iteration of the CAP will maintain this direction of travel, while also seeking to prepare and equip farmers to meet the challenges of the future and ensure that the CAP plays an increasing role in meeting the full range of Commission priorities in so many other areas, whether that is in relation to jobs and growth, international trade, research and investment, environment and climate action, or healthy lifestyles for our citizens.

How can farmers' positioning in the food chain be improved?

In February 2016, Commissioner Hogan announced the creation of the Agri Markets Taskforce, to look at how to improve the functioning of the food chain. The Agri Markets Taskforce identified a number of potential improvements which could lead to a stronger and more sustainable food chain, where the position of the farmer, who is in most cases the weakest link, would be strengthened. Included in these proposals were better producer cooperation, outlawing a number of unfair trading practices (UTPs), and increasing market transparency. The so-called Omnibus simplification, which is nearing completion, includes some real improvements in the area of producer cooperation. The Commission Work Programme for 2018, meanwhile, includes provision for a food chain package, which entails proposals on UTPs and market transparency, subject to an impact assessment and better regulation process.

• Do you think the EU budget should be kept at current levels post 2020? How?

The question of the EU budget is, of course, one for Heads of State and Government (HoSG) when they turn their attention to the next MFF. What Commissioner Hogan has consistently said is that he wants to see a strong, well-funded CAP in the next programming period. Of course, the next MFF will have to be negotiated against the backdrop of the UK's departure from the EU and, as a significant net contributor, the implications of their departure will have to be factored into the negotiations on the MFF. Commissioner Hogan has called for all policymakers and stakeholders who support a strong and well-funded CAP to make their voices heard and bring their influence to bear in the coming weeks and months.

• What is the timetable for the future CAP proposal and decisions?

The Communication on the "Simplification and Modernisation of the CAP" remains on track for adoption at the end of November. Commissioner Hogan intends to be ready to come forward with a legislative proposal following the adoption of the MFF proposal by the Commission in late Spring.



▶ 2017 EU grain harvest recovered but farmers suffering from unstable weather events and cost-price crunch

A good EU cereal harvest has been confirmed in 2017, despite the unstable weather events, but we have concerns over the quality of the harvest and the cost-price squeeze hitting producers, Chairman of Copa and Cogecas' Cereal Working Party Max Schulman said.

Looking at the final estimates, he said that the EU cereals harvest is estimated to be 0.4% up on last year's levels, reaching 297 million tonnes. This is mainly due to better weather conditions in some Member States compared to the extreme weather events seen last year. But some countries still experienced unstable weather conditions ranging from frost, heavy rain to drought this year. The variable conditions will impact on the quality of EU production. Spain suffered particularly from drought and they had to harvest most of their crops early. We are also concerned about the quality of the crops in Northern countries – Sweden and Finland – as the harvest had still not finished in October due to the heavy rain. Favourable prospects in the USA, Canada, Kazakstan as well as a bumper crop in Russia also affects the market balance, he added.

Due to a series of good harvests, cereal prices remain quite low for the third year running and farmers are still feeling the cost-price crunch, with fertilizer prices remaining quite high. I consequently welcome the setting up of the new EU grain market observatory which should help farmers and their cooperatives to better understand market developments.

Better information on prices and data should enable them to plan ahead better and avoid going into a crisis, arable farmer Max Schulman explained.

EU oilseeds production is also expected to be up 2% this year reaching 32.4 million tonnes. EU rapeseed production is back to an average of 21.3 million tonnes which will ensure EU livestock producers have a good supply of protein crops to feed their animals. We have seen a shift towards Winter rapeseed production this year due to the better weather conditions seen over the winter period which explains the higher production levels and increased yields.

The increased area in rapeseed is linked to the very low economic attractiveness of cereal production and low prices.

Producers have nevertheless been experiencing problems with sowing their next crops with the drought and wet weather conditions limiting the sowing area for the next season. We consequently welcome the discussion with MEPs and the EU Commission on setting up the long term protein crop strategy for the coming years. It is all about food security, critical mass and the contribution to sustainable protein crop production”, Chairman of Copa and Cogeca's Oilseeds Working Party and oilseeds producer Arnaud Rousseau added.

Mr Schulman went on to underline the need for farmers to have a good toolbox at hand to cope with the challenges. They need new varieties at hand that are better adjusted to both drought and the extreme wet conditions, for example, and a good availability of Winter and Spring seed varieties. Farmers also need to have flexibility on what crops they can grow so that they can adjust to the extreme weather events.

On top of the challenge of climate change, producers have serious concerns about the phasing out of many plant protection products (PPPs) and the ban on the use of PPPs and fertilizers on Ecological Focus Areas (EFA) which will result in a shift towards set-aside in the next season. The EU shouldn't keep phasing out PPPs at short notice when no alternative products exist or when there is no scientific evidence to justify a ban. Glyphosate is a case in point.

We have been pressing hard for the full 15 years re-authorisation of the herbicide active substance glyphosate in the EU after the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) gave it a positive assessment.

Strong scientific evidence supports the re-authorization of this widely-used active substance for 15 years, he concluded.



The EU pork market has improved since the crisis two years ago, but we need to remain vigilant to ensure that this situation continues in 2018, Copa and Cogeca Chairman of the Pig Working Party Antonio Tavares warned.

Talking in Brussels, Mr Tavares said

***“The situation has improved a lot since the crisis we had had two years ago and pork prices are much better. Our exports have been good, driven by demand from Asia, in particular China.*”**

Feed prices are also quite low, compared to 2-3 years ago, due to the low grain and protein crop prices which helps pork producers to remain competitive. But we need to remain vigilant. Pork prices are expected to fall in the second half of 2017, which is normal for this time of year”.

***“Our exports to China are also already starting to drop with statistics showing a sharp decline of as much as 17% in EU exports to China in the first six months of 2017 compared to the first six months of 2016. And since China is our biggest export market, this is very worrying.*”**

We have to make sure that the positive situation continues. We will reflect on the market situation in the months ahead to make sure that it remains positive in 2018”.

“To ensure this, we need to make sure that not only the outbreaks of African Swine Fever are under control, as we set up an eradication strategy. We need to make sure that the disease is completely eradicated. We have pressed the European Commission to make sure that this happens. We have unanimously proposed additional measures to eradicate the disease,” he insisted.

► EU pork market positive but actions must continue to ensure favourable situation in 2018

***“We are also asking the Commission to open up other new markets for our quality produce and ensure that the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) barriers to trade imposed by non-EU countries are eradicated.*”**

The WTO’s Appellate Body has confirmed that the trade restrictions on live pigs, pork and other pig products from the EU, imposed in 2014, violates international trade rules. This is positive but it does not mean anything unless the EU agrees on a plan to implement the ruling and the restrictions are lifted. We urge the EU to keep up its efforts to re-open a market that used to take a quarter of our pork exports 24 percent of the EU’s exports with an average annual value of about €1.4 billion. If the problem is not solved by the end of the year, the WTO would set the conditions for the EU to retaliate,” he stressed

He concluded by saying that they are following the Working Party Strategy on animal welfare and the Chairmanship is working on actions taken by producers to prevent tail biting and to reduce tail-docking of pigs.



► With poultry flocks ravished by impact of bird flu last season, Poultry Chairman calls for vigilance for next season

With European poultry flocks hit badly by the bird flu epidemic last season, poultry producer and Chairman of Copa & Cogecas' Poultry and Eggs Working Party Charles Bourns called for vigilance for the next season.

Talking on his poultry farm in the UK, Charles Bourns said "Our poultry producers invested a lot in their free range units and were hit hard by the impact of bird flu on their flocks last Winter. The H5N8 strain of bird flu is endemic in wild birds and resulted in over 80% of free range laying hens to be kept indoors to avoid infection last season. This meant that many producers saw their eggs downgraded from free range to barn eggs, due to EU rules, at a huge cost for them".

"It is consequently good news that the EU Commission is adapting these rules for the next season by extending from 12 weeks to 16 weeks the period for which poultry flocks can be kept indoors before losing their free range status. We worked hard for this and I am very proud of it."

We hope that MEPs and the Council will see the urgency of the matter and agree the Commission proposal as soon as possible", he stressed. "We will have to remain vigilant for the next Winter and keep biosecurity measures up", he explained. "

Some producers – especially in Belgium and the Netherlands – have also been hit hard by the problem of eggs contaminated with the banned insecticide fipronil. Fraudulent practices should be severely punished and inspections and controls should ensure that these illegal practices pre-farm gate are better identified in future. Producers have put in place a reliable traceability system from farm to fork that came at a high cost to ensure a good functioning. And it is thanks to this system that the authorities were able to trace the eggs, egg products and food products back to the origin and solve it as fast as possible.

The market and egg prices nevertheless remains stable even moving upwards due to the fewer amount of eggs on the market but it is very hard for producers directly affected by it, especially as compensation is not automatic.

Lessons need to be learnt from this. In our working party, we will launch a debate on the number and quality of substances to fight different pests in

particular red mite, and underline the need to further develop research on more effective control methods for red mite. It is important now to restore consumer confidence and to promote the high standards of the EU model of production via promotion actions, he stressed.

Looking at additional challenges, he said that it is important that imports to the EU meet EU standards. "We have some of the highest standards in the world and a significant share of our costs in producing poultry meat and eggs are due to EU regulations. We don't get subsidized. So it's important that imports comply with our rules and that agriculture is not used as a bargaining tool in the upcoming trade talks.

We have particular concerns about a trade deal with the Latin American Trade bloc Mercosur and additional market access to the EU for their poultry meat. Brazil is already the top exporter to the EU with 500, 000 tonnes of Brazilian poultry meat imported annually", he said.

"We also need to step up actions with South Africa which has introduced anti-dumping duties on European chickens from some Member States – the UK, Netherlands, Germany - and is moving to introduce safeguard measures as a protectionist measure. This works against the spirit of the Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA) which regulates trade between them on the grounds that imports from Europe pose a threat to the local industry. This is clearly unjustified. Moreover, South Africa has failed to follow the World Health Organisation (OIE) recommendations and recognise the EU principle of regionalisation on Avian Influenza whereby only areas infected with the disease are banned", he added.

Finally, he underlined the need to make sure that producers are not disadvantaged by Brexit as poultry trade is very integrated.

Prospects on the market are nevertheless quite good at the moment as long as we can learn from our past mistakes and manage to resolve the upcoming challenges, he concluded.





Innovative livestock farmer Daniel Coulonval talks about his investment into renewable energy to provide electricity for 350 households

Talking on his farm in Couvin, livestock farmer Daniel Coulonval spoke of the challenges facing EU livestock producers and how he has diversified into renewable energy to provide electricity for 350 households using manure from the cattle.

He has a livestock farm with 400 animals – 200 dairy cows and 200 beef cattle – Belgian blanc bleu for beef and Holstein red and black. And he grows a mixture of cereals and sugar beet to feed the animals. But he warned of the many challenges facing livestock producers, especially the market volatility and poor farm incomes which are 40% of average earnings. Moreover, he suffered from drought on the farm this year and he has had to conserve water by using it just for the animals.

“Less and less young people are entering the sector”, he warned. To stabilise his revenue and to maximise the potential of the farm, his on-farm diversification includes a new investment in a renewable energy plant using manure from the farm to generate biogas and electricity for 350 houses in the area. The investment cost as much as 1.7 million euros and was financed 85% from loans from EU banks as well as 15% from his own resources. Some of the loans are based on the job creating potential that the investment will have. But it will take 15 years to pay off before he sees any profits from it so his upcoming priorities include consolidating this investment. “The investment is also not only about stabilising our income, it is

also about protecting the environment and meeting the objectives of COP21. This is a good example of the circular economy working”, said Mr Coulonval. He also spoke of the many advantages of agriculture and how the investment has boosted growth and jobs in the area.

Other challenges are to make sure farmers get the right sort of training and education to raise consumer awareness of farmers and where their food comes from, he said. He was nevertheless more optimistic about the future of the dairy sector, which has improved a lot since the crisis and he hopes that the market will continue to stabilise.

The visit also showed the importance of improving infrastructures and internet access in rural areas, as there was no broadband access in some parts which makes it impossible for farmers to take advantage of the latest technologies. [#livestockcounts](#)



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Source: European Union, European Parliament. (2015), Draft Report on Technological solutions to sustainable agriculture in the EU (2015/2225(INI)).

Source: OECD/FAO (2012), OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2012 – 2021, OECD Publishing and FAO.

► **Chairwoman of Copa's Women Committee Willemien Koning-Hoeve underlines need for conditions to be improved for women in rural areas and for more equal treatment of men and women**



Chairwoman of Copa's Women Committee, Willemien Koning-Hoeve, underlined the importance of improving conditions for women in rural areas and for more equal treatment between men and women.

This topic was also highlighted in the report on women and their role in rural areas, adopted by European Parliament and drawn up by MEP Petir and MEP Senra Rodriguez.

Talking on her dairy farm in the Netherlands, Willemien Koning-Hoeve said "We worked hard with MEPs on this report and it takes on board many of the key messages that we developed in the Women's Committee. It's an important achievement under my Presidency".

"Women play an important multifunctional role in rural areas, often developing on-farm activities like agri-tourism and also being drivers of innovation. This was shown by our 2016 Copa's Innovation Award for Women Farmers which demonstrated that women are good entrepreneurs and can develop innovative farms. Our next Award takes place in 2018 and I urge our members to enter it", she said.

"But rural communities need better access to basic infrastructures like broadband and social services such as childcare, to ensure a balance between work and family life. Women ought to be encouraged to participate in decision-making bodies and they should have better access to credit and education. We need to see these topics being converted into policy," she insisted. "I hope that my successor will work to ensure this", she added.

The report also points out that women represent slightly less than 50% of the total working population in rural areas but only about 30% of farm holdings are managed by women. It warns that women in rural areas suffer from serious gender pay and pensions gaps which need to be improved.

Willemien Koning-Hoeve went on to draw attention to the survey that Copa's Committee is working on, saying that. "The status of the spouses who assist the farmers still needs to be recognized in some EU countries and improved in others. We have spouses working full time or part time on the farms without social protection, salaries or coverage

for occupational accidents. We have already collected good practices that could be implemented in other EU countries and we are working with the EU Parliament and other institutions to improve this situation."

The Women's Committee closely follows MEPs activities whenever women from rural areas are affected and is also collaborating with the Commission Directorate-General for Agriculture, Justice and Employment, she added. "For instance, the EU initiative "Pillar of Social Rights" started in 2015 and we are continuing to discuss, for example, the Work-Life Balance proposal that will replace the withdrawn Maternity Leave Directive", she stressed.

"At the moment, we are working on our contribution to the 62nd session of the UN Committee on the Status of Women. It will be next year in New York and it will focus on the "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls". We are very happy that we can work together with the European Commission and hopefully with all the Member States on this topic for a good and strong position from the EU block."

"We have also increased our visibility on social media by developing the Facebook page "European Rural Women" (<https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanRuralWomen/>). It enables us to show to the public what we are doing and to show the plight of women in rural areas and the need to empower them as they are the backbone of rural areas", she underlined.

"Under my Chairmanship, I have visited several Committees of Women Farmers across Europe and I have spoken with a lot of women farmers. Our challenges are the same and we need to continue working together within Copa, sharing best practices, supporting each other and work closely with the EU institutions for a better position for family farms in EU", concluded Willemien Koning-Hoeve.

▶ EU move to put beef and ethanol in trade offer to Latin American trade bloc Mercosur would devastate EU agriculture sector

It is incomprehensible that the EU Commission has put beef in its market access offer to the Latin American trade bloc Mercosur when the outcome of the Brexit talks is not known”, Chairman of Copa and Cogeca Beef Working Party Jean-Pierre Fleury said in an interview.

It would devastate the EU beef sector, growth and jobs in rural areas and undermine EU food safety standards. The statement comes after the EU finalized its offer to include a quota of 70,000 tons of beef and of 600,000 tons of ethanol in a potential trade deal.

Jean-Pierre Fleury said

“Now is not the time to propose this when we do not know the impact of the talks on the exit of the UK from the EU. With 52% of Irish beef destined for the UK market, we cannot start to think of putting further pressure on the EU beef market in a trade pact with the Latin America countries”.

“Ethanol must be excluded too and we have serious concerns about orange juice, fruit and vegetables. We already import substantial volumes from these countries and get no reciprocity from them. Eleven Member States support these concerns and we urge them to continue to oppose the new offer”, Copa and Cogeca Secretary-General Pekka Pesonen said.

“Also, it is unacceptable that the EU Commission has put beef in its market access offer to Mercosur when investigations into the Brazilian beef scandal have not been completed. Export certificates were falsified for ten years or more and veterinary requirements not complied with in Brazil.”

We have some of the highest food safety and animal welfare standards in the world and we cannot undermine these. This is important given that imports to the EU do not have to meet our high standards. Moreover, consumers are demanding local produce more and more and we should not deprive them of this”, he stressed.

He continued: “The amount we are talking about is equivalent to 1.7 million suckler cows in the EU and would result in 40% of high value cuts that do not originate from the EU being consumed. Beyond the devastating impact on the EU beef sector, growth and jobs in rural areas where often no alternative source of employment exists would be jeopardized. It is unacceptable that the Commission is sacrificing the EU agriculture sector and allowing double standards on the Single Market”.



Copa and Cogeca met with Commissioners Hogan and Malmstrom to oppose the EU move to put beef and ethanol in its market access offer and will hold further meetings in the months ahead. A high level event with EU Farm Commissioner Hogan as well as Ministers from Belgium, France, Finland, Portugal, Croatia, Poland, Portugal, UK was also held with great regional specialities from all across Europe on offer to taste to show the benefits of the sector.

“The EU Commission must stand by its producers and protect the quality produce we have to offer. After all, if a balanced deal on agriculture is not agreed with Mercosur countries, it will not get through European Parliament or Council”, he concluded.

New #EUFarmRecipes book launched to help consumers know more about food and farming

A new #EUFarmRecipes book has been launched showcasing recipes from across the EU to show consumers the story behind their food and the real value of it.

The new farm recipe book, created by Copa and Cogeca, provides nutritious recipes from across the EU, with each recipe showcasing the farmer behind it, stating how the food was produced and its history to show consumers the real value of their food.

The many nutritional benefits of food is highlighted with great tips on what vitamins and minerals are best in a diet as well as key facts and figures about food and farming. This innovative book aims to teach people about the importance of taking time out to cook and to enjoy precious mealtimes with family, colleagues and friends.

More and more, there are farm open days taking place across Europe, with farm schools and on-farm cooking activities, bringing consumers closer to agriculture, and this book aims to draw attention to this.

The launch event, filled with regional specialities from across Europe, was attended by over 100 people, with many high-level figures.

These included EU Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan who underlined that food is at the centre of our European identity, with every Member State having a product that people can identify with.

“This helps to generate a hugely important consumer interest in food, and it also instils a sense of local pride”, he insisted. He highlighted the importance of celebrating the stories and traditions behind our food products and never losing sight of the farming men and women that grew these products in the first place.

Spanish MEP Clara Eugenia Aguilera Garcia went on to underline that food is the result of our farmers’ hard labour and it is what goes into defining our gastronomy, culture and lifestyle. “Agriculture is much more than an economic sector. The fact that there is a wide range of healthy, quality food available to European consumers is not down to how any particular supermarket operates”, she said.

Copa Vice-President Roberto Moncalvo from Italy emphasised the key role of farmers in providing this nutritious, safe and quality food to consumers. “We stand side by side - farmers and consumers - and we share a common vision of sustainability, wellness, and safety.



The food we bring to the consumers' table tells a story of tradition and innovation, passion for farming and love for our land. A story that deserves to be shared widely", he claimed.

Wrapping up, Chairwoman of Copa & Cogeca Foodstuffs Working Party Annette Toft highlighted the need to have the right type of nutritional labelling to convey these multiple benefits. She warned against latest developments in the EU on this, saying that the introduction of colour coding on labels are overly simplistic and are the wrong

approach to ensuring a balanced diet. "With this system, some of the many nutritional benefits that our agriculture produce has to offer is ignored which ends up misleading consumers about the true value of their food", she said.

Discover the recipes here and enjoy the gastronomy Europe has to offer: <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/58887036/final-recipes-book>. Don't miss Copa and Cogeca's videos available on our social networks too showcasing these nutrient-packed recipes.



Winning photographer of #Livestockcounts Campaign shows great compassion farmers have for their animals



The winning photographer of Copa and Cogeca's photo competition was announced in October portraying the great livestock production practices that EU farmers and their cooperatives respect and the compassion that they have for their animals. Something that is often neglected by society and politicians.

Frederik Thalbitzer – a journalist from the Danish Farm and Food Organisation DAFC – won first prize in our competition with a joint first place position for both of his photos.

This is for both the quality of his photos in terms of colour and proportions and for his ability to showcase the care farmers have for their animals, striving always to improve their animal welfare practices.

The winning photos feature organic farmer Arne Jorgensen with his jersey cows enjoying the free life grazing in the field and also of organic farmer Randi Vinfeldt working for better animal welfare for her pigs.

The additional value from them is that they underpin the need for gender equality in agriculture. Something which Copa is greatly involved in, trying to achieve more equal treatment of men and women in rural areas.

The runner up is the Polish photographer Piotr Szewczyk for a great shot of young sheep where

also the colours in the photo are very good and the composition as well.

Reacting to the news, Copa and Cogeca Secretary-General Pekka Pesonen said "I am delighted to be able to award Frederik top prize for his outstanding portraits which show the great care and love farmers have for their livestock. He will be lucky enough to win first prize and spend a week-end in Madrid with his wife. I am happy with the good number of entries that we received in this competition and hope that the public will become more aware of the high welfare and environmental standards that our European farmers and cooperatives meet. A service which is often ignored by society. The runner up will get a nice hamper of quality farm produce".

The competition forms part of our **#livestockcounts** communication campaign which aims to show the multiple benefits of the EU livestock sector for growth & jobs, vibrant rural areas, a balanced diet and to show the high production standards EU farmers meet.

Meat provides consumers with an important source of protein in their diet. Vitamin B12 is particularly important and animal products, including meat, dairy and eggs are the primary natural sources of B12 which is vital for children. Dairy produce is also packed with calcium which is vital for strong bones.



Livestock are also important for the economies of rural areas where often no other source of employment exists. What's more farmers in the EU meet some of the highest production standards in the world.

Yet consumers are often unaware of these all these great benefits. This photo competition is therefore designed to increase the visibility and show to the public the high livestock production standards the EU has and the great conditions animals live in.

The campaign also aims to increase awareness of the new initiatives being developed by European farmers and agri-cooperatives to encourage healthy eating habits at an early age and to bring consumers back in touch with nature.

More and more, there are on-farm activities and farm open days across Europe with cooking workshops which provide closer contacts with citizens and enhance consumers' connection with farming, food and rural areas. Food camps for children are being developed to bring about a positive change in the lifestyle of children and tackle obesity.

Events & actions will take place every month



throughout 2017 and in 2018 across Europe. There are live cooking shows and nutritious advice from leading chefs. There are press events, farm visits, a cookery brochure and videos presenting new easy to cook recipes from across Europe, hosted twitter debates, leaflets and videos showing what farmers and their cooperatives are doing to tackle antimicrobial resistance and to meet high production standards.

◆ Farmers and their Cooperatives step up fight against food waste

Annette Toft, Chairwoman of Copa & Cogeca Foodstuffs Working Party

With discarded agricultural produce being used more and more in food processing, in feed or to fertilise the soil, European farmers and their cooperatives are making great advances in tackling food waste. This shows their commitment to making the circular economy work.

Farmers have no reason to discard a product that has a value. In fact, agricultural produce that does not meet the standards set out by EU legislation or by the market and which cannot be used directly for human consumption are used for processing. If that is not possible, they are used for animal feed, for bio energy purposes or for incorporation in the soil to increase the soil's organic matter content.

By using natural resources as efficiently as possible and to minimise losses on their farms, European farmers and their cooperatives are also already making a big contribution to managing food wastage.

They are committed to making the circular economy work. Fostering the circular approach by enhancing productivity whilst using natural resources efficiently is crucial.

New business models to enhance competitiveness can be created by optimising the use and re-use of resources. This is a real opportunity also to gain access to new markets and we need policies to facilitate this.

When measuring food losses and food waste, it is important too to make a clear distinction between what is “avoidable” and what is “non-avoidable”. When defining food losses, it is important to consider that several factors affecting primary agricultural production go beyond farmers control, such as adverse weather conditions, pests and diseases. Including those losses into the food waste statistics would give a wrong picture as it would overestimate food losses and food waste.

I also want to stress the importance of focusing the discussions on the concept of “wastage” which refers to an individuals’ behaviour. It is important to characterize situations whereby the action or behaviour of the operator would actually lead to the disposal/elimination



of products, which otherwise could have been marketed as a food product or valorised through other means. In this case, campaigns to raise awareness of the value of food, the understanding of date markings on food packages or how to better store food at home are vital to better inform people and to prevent this from happening.

It is also good that the EU has created a Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste. It is a very positive initiative enabling an exchange of best practices and support for actions and discussions between the different actors involved.

This will contribute to a change in behaviour along the chain from primary producers to consumers to prevent and to minimise food losses and food waste. The creation of such a platform was the result of several years’ work by the European Commission and stakeholders and this should be commended.

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EU negotiators get an agreement on EU organic farming review welcome news

EU negotiators agreement on the EU organic farming review under the Maltese Presidency, with most of the key elements called for by Copa and Cogeca included in the political agreement struck, welcome news. Chairman of Copa & Cogecas' Organic Working Party Kees Van Zelderen said "We believe that the agreement made under the Maltese Presidency goes in the right direction towards harmonising rules at EU level. It also takes into account most of the key elements called for by Copa and Cogeca in the review. In particular, the principle of annual on-site control is maintained for all operators with very restrictive conditions for the derogation. There are no limits on the size of holdings and mixed farms are allowed. Concerning cases of non-compliance and of the presence of non-authorized substances, clear steps with clear timing are foreseen to provide for further harmonisation. For organic seeds, the system of derogations for non-organic seeds linked with a database will ensure that this derogation ends faster. The compliance regime for imports certified by control bodies will also ensure a level playing field between EU farmers and farmers from non-EU countries. Once the political agreement has been endorsed, we will make sure that the implementing and delegated rules will suit the sector and enable it to develop".

The European Agri-Cooperatives Confederation (Cogeca) holds Business Forum on "Harnessing the power of digitalization in the agri-food chain"

Digital breakthroughs and global tendencies, such as demographics, emerging economies, urbanization, environment are shaping tomorrow's agri-food value chain and some value chain's mechanisms have already been significantly impacted. Precision agriculture technologies are thriving, data generated by agricultural activities are now shared, collected and analysed to provide valuable information to farmers and their cooperatives. Agricultural cooperatives identify digitalization as a key driver for developing value added services, satisfying rising food demand, keeping in step with changing consumer behaviour and strengthening competitiveness. The Business Forum on "Harnessing the power of digital in the agri-food chain" in Brussels on November 29 will give the opportunity to showcase the digital transformation underway in European agri-cooperatives. The European Award for Cooperative Innovation launched by Cogeca to promote practices and innovative solutions designed by cooperatives will be presented on the same day.



Cheese and butter market good but problem of skimmed milk powder and low returns for farmers unresolved, Copa and Cogeca Milk Working Party Chairman says

There is a very good situation on the EU market for cheese and butter, as result of higher demand, but there is still a problem of skimmed milk powder (SMP) surpluses on the market which risk worsening, Chairman of Copa & Cogecas milk working party Thierry Roquefeuil said.

Mr Roquefeuil – a dairy farmer from France – said

“Cheese and butter are currently carrying the market and the dairy market is expected to remain stable to firm during the next months. The positive situation is down to higher demand for cheese and butter”.

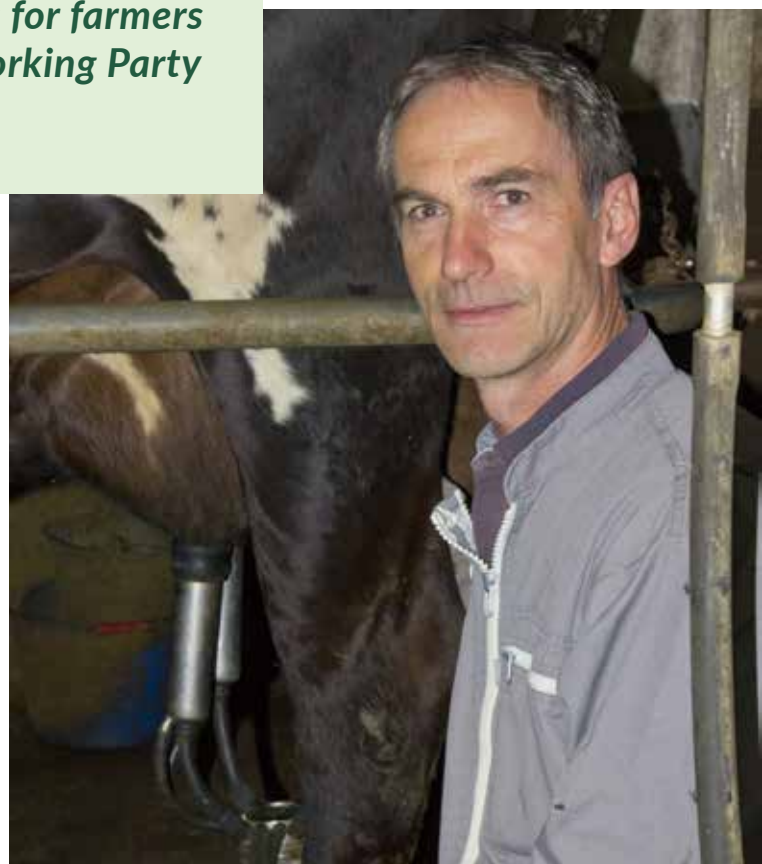
Global demand for cheese is steadily growing, especially in Asian countries. Whilst demand for butter is high worldwide”.

“Our exports to the USA have soared after the announcement about its health benefits and the fact that natural fats have better health benefits than trans-fatty ones. Stocks are also very low and at the last EU milk market observatory meeting, industry said that there will be a shortage of 60, 000 tonnes of butter by the end of the year”, he said.

“Record butter prices are consequently being seen but what needs to be resolved is the correlation between the butter price and the price that the producer gets. Producer prices have not risen as much as prices for butter. Producers need to see a better return from the market”, he insisted.

“Unfortunately, the rise in cheese and butter demand has not been matched by an increase in milk demand, which is declining, despite the fact that it is full of calcium which is vital for strong bones and the healthy development of children”, he added.

“We still have around 350, 000 tonnes of skimmed milk powder (SMP) in public intervention. Intervention is now open again and I am worried that stocks could reach as much as 400, 000 to 500, 000 tonnes this year which could put downward pressure on prices.



We urge the Commission to be prudent when putting the stocks back on the market,”he warned.

“Milk production growth is nevertheless limited in 2017 and still negative in the EU, New Zealand and Australia. On the consumption side, there is a question mark over China – a big dairy consumer – which could impact the market. China’s consumption of dairy is forecast to grow at 2-2.5% annually for the next five years which is slower than before. Infant formula consumption is also expected to grow at 10% per year, down from 15%”, he warned.

Looking to the future, Thierry Roquefeuil said “We are working on key avenues for the dairy sector which we hope the Commission will take into account in their discussions so that we can avoid having a similar crisis to the one seen 2 years ago. We are also looking at further developing futures markets/hedging tools in the dairy sector. They are already well developed in the cereals sector and they can help to protect farmers against risk and volatile prices. The European Milk Market Observatory is a welcome move here too as it provides farmers with the market data which they can use when making their business decisions. More timely data would be needed though”.

▶ EU must defend olive exports to United States

Copa and Cogeca Chairman Rafael Sanchez de Puerta hit out at the unjustified move by the U.S. to impose duties on imports of black Spanish table olives, warning that it sets a dangerous precedent for other sectors under the CAP.

The U.S. International Trade Commission has issued a preliminary determination on countervailing duties in the case, following a complaint from U.S. olive producers, and in view of this, the U.S. Department of Commerce will issue its preliminary view on November 20. A final view is expected in March 2018, which would be followed up by a hearing.

But Copa and Cogeca warn that such a measure would be illegal. Chairman of the Civil Dialogue Group for table olives and olive oil Rafael Sanchez de Puerta said in an interview that it would not be justified to impose the duties and would set an unprecedented risk for other production sectors under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

This has been echoed by many MEPs and EU Ministers. EU Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan also rejected the complaint in October, saying that CAP support for the sector is authorized under World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules and consequently has not been found to distort competition.

In a letter sent to Copa and Cogeca, EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom promised that "The Commission will continue assisting the Spanish authorities and the Spanish producers, in order to avoid the imposition of any unjustified measure".

Rafael Sanchez de Puerta explained that the main reason why Spanish exports of black table olives are so competitive is because producers have made big efforts to cut their production costs and have also made important investments in leading technologies. "Cooperatives also help farmers to be more efficient as they provide services to them using economies of scale. Furthermore, support under the CAP is authorised under WTO rules and consequently has not been found to distort competition. It is illegal to impose such measures, especially when most countries in the world have some sort of support system", he stressed.



"Moreover, producers are up against increasing challenges like extreme weather events and market volatility. This year, production of table olives and olive oil is expected to fall sharply as a result of the drought seen in many countries. We expect production for tables olives to reach 596.000 t in Spain this year," he pointed out.

It is a very important sector not only for producers in Southern countries but also for growth and jobs in rural areas. Without it, there would be an exodus from rural areas which risks deepening the adverse economic climate. Like producers in most countries in the world where support is also given, Spanish olive producers need some CAP support to help them survive the increasing weather events, he underlined.

"Another key problem in the sector is the imbalance of power in the food chain, with just a few industries and retailers controlling the market. Faced with the huge buying power of a few retailers, we need measures to re-balance the power in the food chain and to concentrate supply by further developing and enhancing the size of producer organizations, like cooperatives.

This helps farmers to market and add value to their produce. It is important to have incentives to help cooperatives merge and to create bigger producer organizations in order to make advances in the food chain and to add value to farmers' produce. It is also important to have legislation to curb unfair practices (UTPs) in the food chain and we welcome EU Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan's efforts here", he concluded.

► Recent EU moves on climate change and renewable energy use will prevent EU from maximizing potential to meet Paris Climate Change Agreement commitments

Latest EU moves on rules to tackle climate change and to promote the use of renewable energy will not enable Member States to maximize their potential in fulfilling the objectives of the Paris Climate Change Agreement, Chairwoman of Copa & Cogeca Environment Working Party Liisa Pietola warned.

“Agriculture and forestry make a big contribution to tackling climate change through for example renewable energy sources. Agriculture and forestry are the only sectors that remove emissions from the atmosphere”, Liisa Pietola stressed.

“These sectors are vital to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement which clearly underline the need to tackle climate change and food security in a balanced way, without threatening food production”, she added.

“But recent EU moves will not enable Member States to maximise their full potential”, she said. “We need coherence between proposals on Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF), the Directive on the Promotion of Use of energy from Renewable Sources (RED recast) and bioeconomy policy towards a low carbon economy”, she explained. **“EU forests absorb the equivalent of nearly 10% of total EU greenhouse gas emissions each year so it is important to ensure that they remain viable if we are to fight climate change. The way to do this and to keep forests growing healthily is to manage them sustainably.** The vote by European Parliament this Autumn on the proposed Regulation on Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) was an improvement on what the European Commission proposed and will help to ensure present and future investments in the forest sector, as well as move towards the Paris Agreement goals. This is crucial since all Member States face serious challenges with their forests as we have seen this Summer with forest fires and the extreme weather events. But it did not go far enough”, she said.

“We also need to see more coherence with the proposed RED II Directive. Forest owners saw Parliament’s Environment Committee vote this Autumn as a positive step vis a vis the approach taken on forest biomass sustainability as it endorses the European Commission’s proposal. The risk based approach that was supported in the vote takes into account existing legislation and different systems on sustainable forest management.

But the vote did not take into account the importance of crop-based biofuels. Another critical point is the introduction of a point which could lead to the inclusion of the cascading use principle into the legislation. It has been reiterated several times, also by the Commission, that this does not respect the EU’s market-orientated approach. These formulations should consequently be removed during the next steps of the legislative process in the EP”, Martin HÖBARTH, Chairman of the Working Party on Forestry added.

This was echoed by Chairman of Copa and Cogeca Biofuels Working Party Dietrich Klein who said “The vote to phase-out the use of biofuels by 2030 lacks vision and seriously undermines the EU’s Climate and sustainability objectives. It aims to phase out crop-based biofuels and considerably restrict the use of biomass from agricultural sources. This is the wrong approach and will prevent the EU from meeting its climate goals and from decarbonising the transport sector”.

“If the EU wants to achieve its ambitious EU climate and energy policy, the market share of EU agricultural and forest biomass, which has been certified as sustainable, should be able to increase from 2020 to 2030. Indeed, the phasing out of crop-based biofuels according to this approach would leave more room on the market for fossil fuels due to the timescale and costs required to implement electric mobility. The proposed cuts would also have a negative effect on the EU agricultural markets mainly on the oilseeds sector and on the EU’s domestic supply of protein-rich by-products used in feed. This is because only a part of the rapeseed, wheat, maize and sugar beet is used to produce biodiesel or bioethanol. The rest is used for feed.

The only winners are fossil fuels. We urge for a cap at 7 % at EU level for biofuels made from arable crops and a blending mandate for crop based biofuels”, he said.

“The proposal to revise the EU Directive on the promotion of renewable energy sources reduces the target for renewables from 10% to 6.8% by 2030. The plans also cut the share of conventional biofuels in transport fuel from 7% in 2021 to 3.8% by 2030 and allow Member States to set up national targets below the one of the EU which is totally unacceptable, he concluded.

► Joe Healy explains why farmers must get a fairer return from the marketplace #fairfoodchain



With farmers only getting 20% of the price of steak, it is vital that everything is done to get a fair return from the marketplace back into farmers pocket, Chairman of Copa & Cogecas Food Chain Working Party Joe Healy stressed in Brussels.

“Farmer’s incomes are under constant pressure. It is clear that due to imbalances of power in the food supply chain and unfair trading practices the biggest percentage of power and returns go to retailers”, he warned.

“A breakdown of the share of the value of the agricultural product shows that farmers receive on average 21% of the share of it whilst 28% goes to processors and 51% to retailers”, he explained.

“I want this to change so that farmers receive over 30% of the value of it. For this to happen, we need more transparency in the food chain. I support the EU initiative to increase market transparency by creating market observatories in the milk, beef and pork sectors. We also need legislation at EU level with independent enforcement by an authority to combat unfair practices and sanction those who break EU law. It is clear that voluntary initiatives do not work. Legislation already exists in 20 Member States but it’s important to have an EU wide one to ensure a level playing field. Below cost selling must stop”, he insisted.

“In my own country Ireland, we already have legislation but it does not go far enough as there is no ban on below cost selling. An ombudsman is also needed to ensure rules are properly enforced”, he added.

He went on to underline that there is a lack of confidence across Europe in how the food chain works.

“Farmers are often too shy to come forward with complaints also for fear of losing their contract with retailers.

Even in the UK, where legislation exists, it is challenging to get farmers to submit complaints due to this fear factor. We have to build confidence in a new system with worthwhile legislation”, he said.

Copa and Cogeca views on this have been supported by many MEPs and Ministers. We also welcome EU Farm Commissioner Hogan’s work on this and the publication by the EU Commission of an EU-wide public consultation on how to make the EU food supply chain fairer. “We expect our contribution on this to feed into the Commission’s proposals which are due out in Spring 2018 so that farmers can receive a fair price for their work”, he concluded.

► EU vineyards victims of climate change

The European Union had one of the lowest wine harvests ever this year, hit by extreme weather events ranging from frost to drought, wine grower and Chairman of Copa and Cogeca's Wine Working Party Thierry Coste warned

Speaking from his vineyard in France, he said that France and Italy were particularly badly hit, experiencing an historic low which has not been since 1945.

But the quality of the grape is expected to be very good all across Europe which should make for great wine.

Consumers are also likely to see higher prices in the shops for their wine, compared to 2016, but the increased price won't be enough to compensate many producers for their huge losses, he added.

Very few get insurance for their crop losses as its too costly and I am afraid that not all farmers will make it into 2018, he warned.

Climate change is accelerating and reduced harvests are becoming the norm, he added.

If the proposed changes to the income stabilisation tool (IST) in the EU Omnibus Regulation is agreed, it will enable aid to be activated when income losses on the farm are 20% instead of 30% which help wine growers a lot, he added.

Outlining the situation in the main producer countries, he pointed out that French production is estimated to reach 37 M hl at the most, which is 18% down on last year's levels.

But this figure masks differences between the regions, with some producers seeing much bigger reductions and only a very few lucky ones seeing a slight increase, he stressed. The Spring frost affected in particular the South West of France, Charentes, Jura and Alsace. Whilst drought struck the regions of Languedoc, Corsica and Beaujolais. The grapes nevertheless ripened earlier, especially in the Mediterranean regions, giving a good quality grape.

In Italy, production is estimated to reach 40 M hl, which is down 26% compared to 2016 (54M hl), with nearly all of the regions seeing a fall of 20% in their production. The low harvest was also due to the adverse and exceptional weather conditions ranging from Spring frosts, hail, and heatwaves, which determined the ripening cycle. In Spain, the estimated production is around 36M hl, which is 20% down on last year's levels (44.2M hl).

Due to frost damage in Spring, annual expectations in Germany are below the long-term average yield of 9M hl nationwide. 2017 is characterized by an unusually early grape harvest with many of the winegrowing areas starting the vintage at the end of July. In fact, the harvest started earlier nearly everywhere in Europe this year – two weeks early on average.

Portugal was the only country this year to have experienced an increase to reach an estimated 6.6 Mhl which is 10% up on last year's levels.



► Brexit: absence of trade deal will have long-lasting impact on EU agriculture and agri-food sector



The absence of a trade deal between the EU and UK will have a detrimental impact on EU agriculture and the agri-food sector, head of Copa and Cogeca's Brexit task force Alo Duffy warned in Brussels.

The UK is a net importer of agri-food products, worth 57 billion euros, and it is well integrated into the Single Market. Between 70-99% of all UK agricultural imports originate from the EU. Exporters to the UK have already felt sharply the impact of Brexit which caused the pound sterling to weaken significantly. Ireland, for instance, exports 37% of its agri-food exports to the UK worth 4.13 billion euros, including 80% of Irish mushrooms, 52% of Irish beef and 25% of Irish dairy exports, which lost 600 meuros of their value already due to the weak pound", he warned.

The sectors most likely to be impacted in order of turnover for exports from the EU to the UK are fruit and vegetables, beef, milk and wine.

Agricultural trade is also important for the UK with 60% of UK agri-food exports (beef, lamb, poultry, dairy, cereals) worth £11 billion to the UK economy go to the EU.

"The lack of progress in the negotiations on the exit of the UK from the EU is frustrating and is having a really detrimental impact on agri-food businesses. This uncertainty is hugely damaging for business investment - it is near impossible to adopt a strategy or make any concrete plans, as it is still so unclear what the future EU-UK trading landscape will be like", he said in an exclusive interview.

"If the UK and EU fail to agree on a Free Trade Agreement for agri-food, exports could be subject to tariffs which under WTO rules can be as high as 80%

for agricultural produce such as dairy", he said. "This will destroy our competitiveness compared to cheaper imports from Oceania and South America, with whom the UK plans to increase trade. As a result, EU exports previously destined for the UK market would be re-distributed within the EU, potentially leading to surpluses and market disturbance across all sectors", he added. "The UK's decision to withdraw from the EU will also have major implications for the EU budget as it is the third biggest net contributors to the EU, with funds totaling 11.34 billion euros in 2014 or 8% of the total budget", he insisted.

"I consequently welcome the setting up of this task force so that we can better discuss and communicate the challenges posed by Brexit to those sitting around the negotiating table.

The Task Force has three key aims: to analyse the issues relating to Brexit on a technical level and highlight these problems within the Brexit debate. It also aims to seek workable solutions which will minimise disruption to trade and the budget", Mr Duffy from the Irish Cooperative Association ICOS concluded.

► Why should glyphosate be renewed for 15 years ?

After months of deliberation, the most commonly used herbicide active substance glyphosate in the world - declared safe by EU scientists - has not been renewed for 15 years.

The credibility of the EU institutions is at stake not to mention safe food supplies produced in a sustainable way.

“This widely used product is not only important to feed a growing population. It also plays an important role for our rural areas, agriculture conservation and fertile soils. Glyphosate means farmers can apply no tillage which reduces soil erosion and keeps soil fertility and soil organic matters up.

Other benefits of no-till and minimum tillage include lower fuel consumption in comparison with conventional ploughing techniques and lower release of carbon dioxide from the soil into the atmosphere”, Chairman of Copa and Cogeca Sanitary and Phytosanitary Working Party Luc Peeters said in Brussels.

“It has been given a positive assessment by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), and the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). I see no reason why it should not be renewed for fifteen years.

Without renewal, our affordable food supplies and agricultural conservation will be put at risk. This is also not in line with Integrated Pest Management and the Sustainable Use of Pesticides. EU farmers are well trained and their spraying equipment is regularly checked, as recently pointed out by the European Commission and Member States. EU decision-makers and Member States should approve it for 15 years. Decisions shouldn't become affected by emotions or politics. If it is not re-authorised, consumer trust in our Institutions and decision-makers will be lost and minority views will take the centre stage”, he added.

His views were echoed by Cogeca President Thomas Magnusson “Its use is vital to secure our food supplies and to secure our competitiveness vis a vis non EU countries where it is widely used.



Farmers in my own country Sweden and in the Lantmännen cooperative are very angry about what has been happening in Brussels and how they are being treated by politicians”.

With vineyards already badly affected by the impact of climate change and extreme weather events this year, he was supported too by Chairman of Copa and Cogeca Wine Working Party Thierry Coste.

Mr Coste warned journalists in Brussels of the three challenges farmers and their cooperatives face: the market impact of Brexit, climate change and a lack of effective plant protection products on the market.

He warned in particular of the adverse impact of phasing out the herbicide active substance glyphosate, saying that decisions should be based on science and many would not be able to meet the twin challenge of climate change and the phasing out of glyphosate.

Concluding, Mr Peeters said “We need PPPs to put in farmers tool box to ensure that we have a competitive, sustainable sector capable of meeting growing world food demand. Science must come first. There is no question about it: glyphosate should be renewed for 15 years. It is unacceptable that the EU has favoured a 5 year renewal, instead of the full 15 year term, when our scientists have declared that it is safe. Nothing should stand in its way”.



► With 6% of young farmers in EU aged under 35, generational renewal priority for Ceja

With only 6% of young farmers in the EU under the age of 35, Jannes Maes new President of the EU Young Farmers Organisation Ceja is anxious to better equip young farmers who are entering the industry.

At Ceja, they have just agreed their position on the future CAP, focusing on three key areas: Generational Renewal, Sustainable Economic Support, Progressive and Proactive Environmental Measures.

Funding is allocated to these three areas, with 20% of the budget targeted to generational renewal, 50% to Sustainable Economic Support, 30% to Proactive and Progressive Environmental Measures, he pointed out.

For Ceja's President, generational renewal is fundamental and it is important to overcome the two biggest barriers facing young farmers, notably access to land and to credit. To achieve this, financial backing to access credit for investments is needed, as well as start-up and investment aid made compulsory in every Member State. A properly funded Rural Development Programme is consequently needed.

In our vision on the future CAP, a palate of measures and support is available for farmers to choose from, which fit into these three key areas, he explained.

These measures include direct payments which need to evolve and work better and not be only linked to land, Mr Maes said. Support can be linked to production in areas where it is vital to maintain production. It is important too that support only goes to active farmers. The top up measures for young farmers also need to be strengthened. Ceja can support capping direct payments to larger farmers, as suggested by the EU Commission, he stressed.

With one of the biggest challenges facing farmers being market volatility, seen recently in the dairy and pork sectors, more focus needs to be put on risk management tools like futures markets and insurance, he added.

Environmental measures need to be improved, using a combination of environmental results-based and management-based payments. There should also be a set of measures dedicated to enhancing the production of renewable energy, he said.

More focus needs to be put on smart farming, with improved infrastructures like access to quality high speed internet across Europe to facilitate e-farming and e-commerce and research into new technologies, he insisted.

It is also important to strengthen farmers positioning in the food chain through the setting up a producer organisations like cooperatives in Rural Development Programmes, he added.

Finally, simplification of current rules from a farmers perspective is important but not at any cost. The rules need to remain effective, he concluded. For details of the position paper, see www.ceja.eu



Ups and downs



- ↑ **#Fairfoodchain: EU Commission considering proposing in 2018 EU legislation to combat Unfair Trading Practices (UTPs) in food chain**
- ↑ **EU Farm Commissioner Hogans' agri-business trade missions: good opportunity to develop news markets for agri-produce**
- ↑ **Proposed review of EU Fertilizer Regulation: positive vote by EU Parliament**
- ↑ **EU dairy and pork markets recovering after severe crisis**



- ↓ **Glyphosate : unacceptable to re-authorise glyphosate for 5 years and not 15 after EU scientists gave positive assessment**
- ↓ **Trade liberalising talks between EU and Latin American trade bloc Mercosur: serious concerns over inclusion of beef, ethanol, fruit and vegetables, orange juice in EU market access offer**
- ↓ **EU biofuel policy: phasing-out use of crop-based biofuels by 2030 lacks vision and undermines EU's Climate and sustainability objectives**
- ↓ **Brexit: absence of trade deal between EU and UK detrimental impact on EU agriculture and agri-food sector**



Copa and Cogeca launch new EU action plan to secure viable future for beef producers

Up against increasing challenges, Copa and Cogeca launched in Brussels in November a new EU action plan to secure a viable future for EU beef producers .

The move came at a high-level press event and reception hosted by Belgian Agriculture Minister Denis Ducarne and attended by EU Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan and Agriculture Ministers from France, Finland, Portugal, Poland, Croatia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Luxembourg and the regional Belgian Ministers, to show the multiple benefits of the sector and the need to maintain a dynamic beef and veal sector in the EU.

Speaking at the event, EU Farm Commissioner **Phil Hogan** said "Our European beef sector is of strategic importance for the wellbeing of our citizens, because it provides us with safe, healthy, and nutritious food and it is important for our economy, because it provides vital jobs, particularly in our rural areas. As EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, I want our European beef sector to succeed, both today and in the future. And I firmly believe that a strong, modern and well-funded Common Agricultural Policy is the best bet to deliver this success. The full and vocal support of Copa-Cogeca, and all the farmers you represent, is required to build the political support necessary to maintain a strong, modern CAP which continues to deliver for our farmers and our citizens."

Copa and Cogeca Secretary-General **Pekka Pesonen** said "EU farmers are first producers of food and need to remain economically viable to continue to do this. Our beef producers provide nutritious, quality beef as part of a balanced diet to over 500 million consumers. At the same time, they keep rural areas vibrant, providing growth and jobs where often no alternative source of employment exists. But they are facing increasing challenges. Their incomes are low and they are being badly affected by the cost-price squeeze".

Outlining the action plan, Chairman of Copa and Cogeca Beef Working Party **Jean-Pierre Fleury** said "It is because of these challenges that we have launched today a new action plan to support our high standard beef sector. The plan includes maintaining specific support under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for the sector in order to keep this fragile production sector viable. It would be disastrous for these rural areas if our specialist beef farms disappeared from these regions. The plan also includes export schemes – export credits, insurance, export guarantees- to help producers cover the increasing risks posed by entering new markets. Thirdly, promotion measures need to be stepped up for beef from our specialized herds on EU and non-EU markets. More focus also needs to be on tools to help farmers better manage risk in the future CAP. We need to encourage too producers to be members of cooperatives as they can play an important role for farmers. Finally, performance and innovation on farms needs to be improved through investment aid in order to continue meet sustainability criteria", he concluded..

Great regional specialities – beef, stew, ribs, burgers - from across the EU were on offer to taste from Belgium, France, Ireland, Finland, Poland, Portugal, UK. The event forms part of our #EUbeef - qualityfirst and #livestockcounts campaign which aims to show how the livestock sector is important not only as part of a balanced diet but also for growth and jobs, vibrant rural areas.

Access to a wide range of animal medicines can help farmers optimise herd health management, while ensuring more efficient use of natural resource inputs and addressing potential production losses.

Over the past decade, fewer new prevention and treatment options have been made available – or are sometimes not species-adapted - for the many different animals farmed in all parts of Europe. This is mostly due to high costs for licencing such products, linked to increasing data requirements and administrative tasks, lack of harmonisation across Europe, and also due to a lack of predictability if certain products can still be used for treating sick animals in the future.

The forthcoming revised legislation on veterinary medicines can help turn this situation around. By rewarding investments, harmonising processes and with the right people making science-based decisions in the interests of animal health and welfare, the animal medicines industry can respond to farmers' needs for new and improved disease prevention and treatment options.

Simply put, by putting in place legislation that is conducive to innovation, we can invest more in research and development. This would lead to a wider availability of more medicines, for more species, in more countries in Europe, making the farmer's job just that little bit easier.




New name, new logo,
still protecting the health
of Europe's animals

Healthy animals mean healthy people and a healthier planet

Our members provide solutions to prevent and treat animal disease. Without them, it would be simply impossible to raise healthy livestock or look after our pets.



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