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**The Future of EU Agricultural and Food Policy: The Regions propose
23 October 2008 - Nantes (Pays de la Loire Region)**

NANTES DECLARATION

**Health Check: mindful of the global challenges,
Europe's Regions suggest a territorial-based treatment**



Europe's Regions, meeting in Nantes on 23 October 2008, hereby agree to take forward the work initiated by the CPMR on the role of the Regions within an overhauled and sustainable EU agricultural, food and rural policy, which both enhances the wide diversity of territories and addresses the global challenges related to food.

The CAP health check gives States the possibility to take a further step in the direction of regionalisation. The States are invited to seize this opportunity. In Europe, there is not one example where the handover of responsibilities to the Regions has resulted in failure as far as territorial policies are concerned. State by State, where this consultation does not work on an institutional or regular basis, the Regions are asking for talks to be organised as of now with their central government to decide on how the changes introduced as a result of the health check should be applied with a view to supporting territorial balance. This includes a model for the delivery and fair distribution of direct subsidies, application of the new article 68 (replacing article 69) and re-orienting the second pillar to benefit from increased modulation.

The Regions reaffirm that agriculture is not like any other economic activity, for it feeds people and maintains territories the world over. In a new context characterised by a world food shortage, we need to totally reconsider all public agricultural policies as well as international trade rules. At European level, it is vital to maintain a genuine policy for regulating agricultural and food markets. It is also necessary - not only for European producers but also for their competitors in other developed and developing countries - to ensure that quality produce with a high territorial value is afforded greater recognition on the world market. The Regions hereby decide to take organised action to assert these principles in the framework of the WTO.

They will also be watching closely to see that **food security** is guaranteed and that world trade rules endeavour to eradicate social and environmental dumping. The same degree of restriction needs to be gradually imposed upon all producers.

In a detailed study published in 2007, the CPMR showed the wide disparity in the level of European funding granted to farmers under the first pillar depending on their geographic location. After 2013, in line with the principle of territorial cohesion set out in the Lisbon Treaty, the Regions want to see a readjustment of the "future first pillar". They therefore ask the European Commission to include as part of its evaluation instruments the notion of **territorial impact study**, alongside the economic or environmental impact studies it carries out already

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In the light of this context, on the occasion of the review of the **rural development** plans to better take on board the new challenges (biodiversity, climate, water, bioenergy), there should be a more widespread regionalisation of these plans throughout the Union in places where today they are delivered on an entirely or mainly national basis. These plans need to place special focus on axes 3 and 4 of the EARDF, the two axes that are truly in line with an integrated development approach and designed to benefit the whole of the rural population. Regionalisation and territorialisation of the programmes under the second pillar for 2010-2013 are paving the way for post-2013 rural programmes, where the principles for partnership with the Regions will be made binding through EU legislation in order to support the principles of territorial cohesion. This is regardless of whether or not rural development policy is to come under future cohesion policy. A regional approach to the CAP (taken to mean the administrative bodies existing in each Member State) will also help to coordinate first pillar funding with aid under the second pillar and thereby avoid contradiction between these two instruments, as is unfortunately all too often the case at present. Furthermore, this offers real prospects that will help in the future to justify an agricultural policy linked to the territory and thereby give the CAP a new legitimacy in the eyes of Europe's citizens.

Although the CPMR has acted as a pioneer insofar as "the CAP and the Regions" is concerned, it does not intend to pursue these strategic objectives alone. It invites the other European regional networks active in the agricultural sector such as AREPO (*Association of European Regions for Products of Origin*) and GMO-free Regions to join it, with arrangements for doing so to be agreed upon accordingly.

This series of proposals, challenges and concerns expressed by the regional players in Europe heralds a future campaign complete with timetable and priorities. In order to contribute effectively to this activity, the CPMR General Assembly decided on 2 October 2008 to task an internal working group, representative in its make-up of the diversity of territories throughout Europe, to look into this area in greater detail.

The representatives of the European Regions present in Nantes hereby agree upon a regional action plan in 2009 for the territorial check-up of the CAP:

- Early 2009: meeting between the General Secretaries of interregional organisations actively involved in agricultural policies;
- Spring 2009: meeting of the CPMR working group to discuss the outlook for regionalisation in the framework of the new legislative context following the adoption of the Health Check;
- End of 2009: meeting of the CPMR working group to discuss trade issues as well as quality and food security issues.

As of 2010, other forms of organisation could be considered to take forward this action, with the two-fold objective of influencing the reform of the CAP after 2013 and establishing the Regions as indispensable negotiating partners in the WTO talks.

In the wake of the unacceptable food riots, the European Regions are convinced that political objectives must prevail when conceiving instruments for supporting agriculture and regulating world trade. Because they are close to the territories and to citizens, they will be staking their claim in the necessary negotiations at the different levels.

Furthermore, the Regions invite the European Commission to develop an on-going partnership with them (over and beyond the sporadic meetings such as this seminar in Nantes or their arbitrary participation in the different committees that advise the Directorate-General for Agriculture). The Regions, under the umbrella of CPMR, are ready and willing to study the forms that this permanent partnership could take and will shortly be taking initiatives to put this aim into practice.