



CONFÉRENCE DES RÉGIONS PÉRIPHÉRIQUES MARITIMES D'EUROPE
CONFERENCE OF PERIPHERAL MARITIME REGIONS OF EUROPE

6, rue Saint-Martin - 35700 RENNES (France)
Tél.: + 33 (0)2 99 35 40 50 - Fax: + 33 (0)2 99 35 09 19
e.mail : secretariat@crpm.org - web : www.crpm.org

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

MINUTES



▪ **Mr Jacques Auxiette**, President of the Pays de la Loire Region, welcomed participants by highlighting the legitimacy of the role of the regions which intend to influence political principles. He immediately positioned the talks in the global, environmental and food security context which makes the CAP a special policy.

This policy must remain a common and European policy with important budgetary issues, as it should not be used as an adjustment variable in times of crisis.

As markets are unable to self-regulate, regulation instruments should be further examined, initially on a European level, then on a global scale.

Mr Auxiette mapped out several areas for further analysis on the promotion of quality, the link between agriculture and special planning and the governance of this policy which remains, from his point of view, much too centralised.

▪ **Mr Claudio Martini**, President of the CPMR, reminded participants that the added value contributed by CPMR lies in the improvement of EU policies from two principle angles: governance and territorial cohesion, which means the CAP is of paramount importance.

Mr Martini underlined that the second pillar is "at a crossroads" and that he believed it was necessary to entrust its management to regional authorities, who have demonstrated their ability.

Mr Martini invited participants not to disregard the global dimension, as to take an interest in this dimension is to be concerned about our own interests.

He ended by proposing that an annual meeting be organised between the European Commission and the Regions, in order to strengthen and structure a necessary dialogue.

▪ **Ms Mariann Fisher-Boel**, European Commissioner for Agriculture, immediately indicated the points where she agreed or disagreed with the CPMR working paper on the future of the CAP, highlighting her satisfaction at being able to be closely involved through participation in this seminar.

On the question of single payment, Ms Fisher-Boel believes that it would not be realistic today to remove the link between single payment to farmers and the number of hectares. To debate this issue would be a waste of time.

On former article 69 (the current article 68) she believes that it can be effective to treat the Region's problems. Ms Fisher-Boel stated her agreement on risk management, considered as very important by the CPMR.

On the other hand, she indicated her disagreement on the instrument with which the system will be developed, believing that it must remain decoupled and as simple as possible. On rural development policy, she called for a wide visibility enabling choice: the system must be very flexible.

On the relation between rural development policy and regional policy, the first should not be integrated into the second as the current system helps to guarantee that funds are put to good use to encourage rural development.

Ms Fisher-Boel considers that additional funding is necessary to overcome the challenges of new issues such as the maintenance of biodiversity and tackling climate change.

Regarding diversity of production and the search for higher standards, Ms Fisher-Boel agreed and referred to the Green Paper on the quality of agricultural products whilst indicating that the Commission is ready to make changes according to the results of the consultation and invited the CPMR to participate in the conference organised by the Czech Presidency in March 2009 on quality production.

Finally, concerning budgetary issues, Ms Fisher-Boel reminded participants that the decision was made in 2002 until 2013 and that we should stand by it in order to have predictability.

Ms Fisher-Boel concluded by reminding participants that regards the CAP, the essential element of the decision goes back to the Member States; however this policy must meet many needs, which legitimises listening to the voice of the regions. She therefore invites the CPMR to continue to give its views on this policy.

Debate

Mr Jean-Marc Bureau, Vice-President of SIVAM, underlined the urgency to change a system (Right to Single Payment) which generates wide disparities between the different kinds of farming subjected to similar constraints.

Mr Olivier Alain, President of the Côtes d'Armor Chamber of Agriculture (France) highlighted the difficulty in adapting to the market at the current time with no regulatory element.

Mr Alain felt that the decoupling had been a mistake and asked that this provision be reconsidered. From his point of view, the second mistake was the deregulation which had put an end to a satisfactory model.

Ms Fischer-Boel reminded participants that it was up to the Member States to decide, but that the conditions for dialogue were there. On decoupling, she felt that it is a good decision insofar as freedom is left to the farmers and that in any case, it is impossible to eliminate all the risks. It is important to take into account the position which the Commission must hold in world talks.

On the first question Ms Fisher-Boel reminded participants that the Commission had opened up the possibility for Member States to review the system in order to have increased flexibility. She admitted that time and effort were needed to achieve this and that pressure from new member states is relied on.

Mr Graciet, President of the Association of Atlantic Arc Chambers of Agriculture, returned to the issue of decoupling, stressing the various kinds of production (annual/multi-annual). In the event of maintaining decoupling, he predicts destruction in animal farming and perennial crops, as sector commitments have been undertaken and the expenses which remain fixed are distributed among those who remain.

Mr Joël Limouzin, President of the FRSEA - Pays de la Loire, noted that the Commissioner had not replied to the question on price regulation and if nothing is done to regulate the markets then we are headed for disaster.

A representative of the *Confédération Paysanne* felt that in 2003 decoupling had not incorporated several elements concerning price volatility and clarity, which has resulted in a current rigidified system.

Ms Fisher-Boel replied that she does not under-estimate the difficulties encountered in animal farming. She pointed out that a discussion is open within the framework of the Health Check in order to know what to do and how to do it concerning the coupling system of ovine/caprinae for milk in disadvantaged regions.

On the last question, she pointed out not to expect a proposal from the Commission on counter-cyclical payments and quoted the example of the USA which will have to change system when faced with the big difficulties that that entails.

Ms Fisher-Boel questioned how can income safety nets be devised? Who will pay the bill? The coupling system will not return. She then quoted the example of Argentina, where the government regulates and decides on everything that does not work.

A representative of **South-West Finland** thanked the Commissioner for her frankness and asked what lessons could be drawn from the crisis and what the possible solutions for the Right to Single Payment are. He also questioned the kind of instruments to be used in order for article 68 to be useful.

Mr Xavier Gizard, CPMR Secretary General, asked the Commissioner if one of the roles of the Commission would not be to encourage the exchange of best practice.

In response to the question from South West Finland, **Ms Fisher-Boel** felt that the budget allocated to article 68 was sufficient.

Regarding a more regulated market and knowing how agriculture should react to the current crisis, she stressed that there has never been a food shortage in Europe, which remains the world's largest exporter. She was not in support of a more regulated market as if we use taxes then other regions of the world will do the same. If we protect our production, we will be excluded from exports. She concluded by reminding participants of the three objectives to be achieved: quality, quality and quality!



For the thematic sessions, speeches can be downloaded below.