

**Intergroup on Sustainable Development of the European
Parliament**

REPORT ON

Common Agriculture Policy and Global Food Security:

**Is CAP the Cornerstone of EU and Global Food Security Policy Now and
Beyond 2013?**

**4th December 2008
Brussels**

Struan Stevenson, MEP and the chairman of the EP Intergroup on Sustainable Development opened the meeting. After his welcoming remarks, he outlined the situation: climate change has the most negative effects on those most vulnerable, especially because they are so dependent on natural resources. The area available for agriculture is shrinking which only adds to the challenges of the global food crisis. The European Union has the potential; therefore it should become the bread-basket of the world.

The second speaker was **Mr. Capoulas Santos, MEP** who chaired the meeting. He also welcomed the participants and said a few words on the importance of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) in tackling the food crisis. He mentioned some changes that would concern the CAP and the Health check with the Lisbon Treaty and then gave the floor to the presentations.

Silvia-Adriana Ticau, MEP

Ms. Ticau (draftswoman of the ITRE Committee) presented the views of the ITRE Committee on the global food crisis and highlighted the various challenges the world is facing, namely demographic changes, increased food demand, high energy prices and climate change. The ITRE Committee suggested to the European Commission to investigate the connection between these and to invest in agriculture production in developing countries. Also, the effects of climate change would be very strong in Southern Europe; water is becoming a scarcity so irrigation systems should be set up. Ms. Ticau also warned that rising energy costs should not jeopardize food production in any way. Biofuels are necessary; however, agriculture has to develop in a sustainable manner. To achieve all this research and development of the next generation of biofuels with no negative effects is needed. In conclusion, Ms. Ticau emphasized the importance of supporting energy crops that do not endanger food production and do not create conditions that further rise food prices.

Loretta Dormal-Marino (Deputy Director General, DG Agriculture, European Commission)

Ms. Dormal-Marino summarized the actions taken by the European Commission so far. It has been monitoring the agriculture market, detected the rise in demand for food, the decline in productivity, the high energy prices, and the trade restrictions from exporting countries. Apparently, the agriculture sector has been able to react to market signals which are why wheat production this year has reached an old time high and there is a decrease in wheat prices. Ms. Dormal-Marino stressed, protectionism is not the solution to future food security. There will always be fluctuations in the prices, but the Health check provides various safety nets so, overall, we are on the right track.

In the longer term food security needs strong supplies: research, development, investment in new technologies and modernization. The situation is of course a complex one, as food production needs to be increased and at the same time environmental implications should be considered, agricultural production needs to happen with respect to climate change mitigation. Food security and tackling climate change are interrelated.

High standards also play a key role in ensuring food security in the long term. All in all, the agriculture sector needs to keep the people, create opportunities, maintain natural resources and deal with climate change at the same time.

Timothy Hall (Acting Director, Directorate E - Biotechnologies, Agriculture, Food, DG Research, European Commission)

Although not well funded over the past two decades agricultural research is now recognized as having a vital role to play in addressing some of the global food security and sustainability challenges, eg.

- the consequences for agriculture of climate change (inc. coping with increased drought and higher temperatures, spread of new animal and crop diseases, and soil degradation);
- the increasing competition for land use between food production, non-food production, environmental conservation and amenity purposes;
- the massive global population increase to 9M by 2050 and changes in consumption patterns.

DG Research cooperates closely with DG Agriculture and DG Development to address these issues. In particular it provides financial support under the 7th RTD Framework Programme to joint research projects between the Member and Associated States and Third country scientists in the following areas:

- sustainable production, management and utilization of natural resources (inc. pest and disease management, crop improvement, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry, low input/organic farming, policy-oriented research)
- food quality and safety and prevention of nutritional disorders (eg obesity)
- development of non-food bioproducts including next generation biofuels, environmental biotechnology, and marine biotechnology.

DG Research also promotes stronger cooperation between the Member States in agriculture-related research, through the Standing Committee on Agricultural research (SCAR) and various specific coordination measures bringing together national RTD programmes, as well as encouraging the development of many Technology Platforms..

While increased coordination across Europe will improve the efficiency of the current total European research effort, many of the solutions needed to address the various complex issues mentioned above, may not be found quickly enough

unless additional funds are allocated to agriculture-related research across Europe in the near future.

Yves Madre (French Presidency)

Mr. Madre presented the views of the French Presidency: CAP is a strategic tool for the future. The European Union has a kind of moral duty to help developing countries to increase their agricultural production and to manage risks they have their agriculture has to face.

Mr. Madre also talked about the Health check, which delivers market oriented policy and offers possibilities to member states to redirect subsidies in order to have a sustainable agriculture sector. It also delivers tools for market management (for example intervention), to tackle the challenges of climate change and to be able to tackle economic problems in the future.

The three main objectives of a future CAP and Health check are to respond to world demand, to respond to EU demand and to meet environmental challenges.

Bernard Graciet (Head of EU Brussels Office, Syngenta)

Mr. Graciet talked about how Syngenta perceives the future of food security in Europe and some of their suggestions regarding this topic. The presentation started with some facts:

- The European Union has probably the safest food supply at the moment
- European life expectancy is increasing and we spend a decreasing percent of our incomes on food.
- People in developing countries, however, already spend 60-70% of their incomes on food, therefore increasing prices effect them significantly
- The number of countries that need to import grain is increasing which will lead to reaching the limits of food aid due to logistical problems in developing countries
- Worldwide, the level of food stocks has not increased
- Biofuels are taking some place
- Agriculture in Africa will take years from now

Syngenta strongly questioned the emphasis on organic agriculture as it will not be able to feed 6 billion people or to solve the food crisis. Challenges of the future include limited farmland availability, decreasing amount and quality water and changes brought by the increase in the average temperature.

Possible solutions would be:

- Use more land for agriculture (there is 4 million hectares available in theory, however we cannot produce on all that because we have to consider environmental aspects of agriculture as well.
- Use land with new technologies and with increased efficiency to produce more on existing available land
- Use water in a more intelligent way

In the European Union the infrastructure, the land and the investment is all available, therefore it is a moral duty to participate in feeding the world by improving the CAP. Agricultural research should be reoriented to integrate agriculture in global concept of rural sustainability and optimum use of nutrients.

Contributions could be done by innovation (new plant protection, precision agriculture, seeds research, public-private partnership projects, public research) and by support for sustainable agriculture, environment protection, biodiversity conservation, cross compliance, training schemes, better control of pesticides, and the clarification of the organic farming concept.

At the end of his presentation, Mr. Graciet also expressed the regrets of Syngenta regarding:

- The move from risk assessment to hazard assessment
- The EU's blindness about GMO technology
- The ideological approach that organic farming is a solution to world hunger
- The incoherent approach about wanting more food safety and forcing more food imports
- The fact that populism might block the policies needed to address the food crisis

Xavier Bourgeois (CEJA- European Young Farmers)

Mr. Bourgeois presented his own experience as a young farmer, he outlined the needs of farmers in the European Union and called for political support which would enable them to produce further and help to solve the food crisis the world is facing.

The presentations were followed by remarks and questions from the audience regarding the EU's rejection of GMOs, the methane emissions coming from agriculture and the ambivalent topic of biofuels vs. food. The panelists replied the questions respectively and concluded that perhaps the next generation of GMOs will provide benefits to the consumers that might deter the resistance of Europeans.