

Final EU deal on agriculture fails on greening, simplicity and fairness

Brussels, 20 November 2013 – Today the European Parliament cast its final vote on the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), rubber stamping a reform that risks being a set-back for the environment, farming and citizens. (1)

“The overall outcome of this reform is a sham”, says Trees Robijns, Senior EU Agriculture and Bioenergy Policy Officer. She continued “The result is contrary to the promises made at the very beginning. The new CAP is not green, not simple and not fair.” (2)

This reform round has been the first one in which the European Parliament got equal say along national governments but the involvement of the body directly elected by citizens has not brought the hoped for democratic accountability. It is remarkable how the Parliament in certain cases has behaved as an extension of the European Council, pushing through ideas that came straight from the Member States’ agriculture ministries. The Parliament managed to delay the discussions and was often not open and transparent in its deal making. This has resulted in a lot of exemptions and complexities thereby losing the commonality aspect in the policy.

“If you look at the policy, it is riddled with exemptions” added Trees Robijns and concluded, “If half of EU farmland is exempted from making space for nature and one quarter is exempted from basic practices such as crop rotation, you cannot call this a green reform. This is a failure for the environment and for citizens that deserve policies that deliver.”

The European Commission should put forward delegated and implementing acts that ensure some minimal delivery for biodiversity and the environment and do not further exacerbate the exemption orgy. (3) Furthermore, the Member States and regions have now the unique chance to implement this policy in an ambitious way. The large flexibility granted to national and regional levels means that the key to the solution is with the national authorities and they will have to share the blame with Brussels when it becomes clear that the CAP has indeed failed.

ENDS

BirdLife Europe is a Partnership of nature conservation organisations in 48 countries, including all EU Member States, and a leader in bird conservation. Through its unique local to global approach BirdLife Europe delivers high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

Notes to the editor:

1. The regulations were approved as follows:

- Financing, management and monitoring of the CAP – to so called: Horizontal regulation: votes in favour 500, votes against 177
- Regulation on Direct Payments to farmers under support schemes within the framework of the CAP: votes in favour 440, votes against 238
- Regulation on the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: approved
- Regulation on the Common organisation of the markets in agricultural products: votes in favour 426, votes against 253

2. BirdLife Europe together with the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) present a *Promise and Reality Factsheet* today that shows the exemptions that strike this new CAP:

http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/CAP%20fact%20sheet_final.pdf

3. BirdLife Europe together with the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) is asking for the following from the European Commission:

- a) Optimise the quality of Ecological Focus Areas
 - Incentivize the use of true ecological infrastructures, such as buffer strips, trees, hedges and ponds rather than crops through the weighting mechanism.
 - Ensure the quality of Ecological Focus Areas through additional criteria (e.g. management requirements to avoid pesticide and fertilizer use on EFAs).
- b) Ensure that crop diversification measures distinguish between crops on the basis of botanical family.
- c) Ensure that Rural Development Programmes only contain truly sustainable measures that are going significantly beyond the greening requirements and cross compliance under direct payments.
 - Ensure that the 30% minimum spending for the environment is only filled with high quality environmental measures, such as agri-environment-climate, forest-environment and Natura 2000 measures.
 - Reject all environmentally harmful measures under Rural Development.
- d) Ensure that the equivalence mechanism can only be used as a way of improving the greening measures and outcomes, rather than watering down existing measures.