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Copernican revolution of the CAP needed

Cut the spraying, shift the spending!

Deliver food security, create long term jobs all across the EU, mitigate climate change, reduce air pollution, protect animal welfare and at the same time improve soil fertility, water management and biodiversity: mission impossible? Not if the College of Commissioners decides to change the way it spends EU money on the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) after 2020, and shift towards sustainable agriculture and food production with an agroecological approach.

The status quo is not an option

There is a clear demand in the EU for a radical change in our agriculture and food policy towards supporting agroecology. On June 14th this year, the European Parliament made a very encouraging first step in the right direction, by [banning pesticides on ecological focus areas](#) , so helping build functional biodiversity and letting these beneficial species work for farmers.

The following day, the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) calling for a ban on glyphosate, the most widely used herbicide worldwide and authorised on the EU market until 15 December 2017, reached a million of signatures only a couple of months after it had been launched. This ECI also calls for EU-wide mandatory reduction targets for pesticide use in order to protect people and the environment from toxic pesticides.

Voices calling for fair trade and policy coherence for development are increasingly mainstream, and the UN FAO's Director General José Graziano da Silva himself is alerting policy makers about the negative impacts of unfair trade deals on developing countries. We have always called for a Do No Harm policy via an import and export strategy which respects fair and sustainable trade practices and local communities on both sides.

Moreover, the Greens/EFA and many others are fighting for better animal welfare standards, and ending factory farming based on rainforest destroying soya and over-use of antibiotics. Europeans want to end dependence on commodities like [palm oil](#), soya and harmful biofuels that drive deforestation, land grabbing and human rights abuses, hunger and poverty worldwide.

Successful detox and transition need support: public money for public goods

The fundamental shift in consumers' choices and in farming practices needs to be reflected in the way CAP money is spent. As the ultimate goal of the agriculture policy is nothing less than food security, this means public support for transitioning to more autonomy and a sustainable agriculture which maintains and creates jobs in rural areas.

Rural development is at the core of such a project: we call for a living countryside - where agriculture is working with nature, not against -, a toxic-free future, as well as vibrant rural communities and economies, fair remunerative prices for farmers producing our food. Strong, well-funded rural development is absolutely needed to counter rural depopulation, help empower communities to build diverse, interconnected local economies, bringing consumers and producers closer via for example short food distribution chains. Rural development is also about defending small farmers against land concentration and land grabbing, fighting for a policy that keeps hands on the land.

After decades of repeated and accumulated toxic pollution, the polluter-pays principles should apply and a lot of work now needs to be done to bring soils back to life and rebuild topsoil. Moreover, the business model of locking farmers into dependency on chemical pesticides and fertilisers needs to be challenged, and replaced with ecosystem functions that are carried out through biodiversity.

The Greens/EFA stand for healthy, resilient agro-ecosystems based on abundant biodiversity to ensure climate-change mitigation and adaptation and long term fertility and productivity. We advocate farm seed systems and high genetic diversity of breeds of animals and varieties of plants, as well as no patents on life and no GM. We are fighting for organic farming to be a forerunner of the gold standard of farming in Europe.

Cutting spending is a false solution

Brexit will have an effect to decrease available agriculture budget, along with the usual game of revising the multiannual financial framework (MFF). In late November 2017, the European Commission is expected to publish a communication on CAP reform (or perhaps just its "simplification and

modernisation" which allows for reduced ambition), which will be the basis for the negotiation for the European Parliament and Member States.

While the current CAP represents about 40% of the EU budget spending, we cannot afford any additional delay in the transition towards food security, ecologically sound land and water management, protection of biodiversity, protection of rural communities, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and the maintenance of farming in remote and marginal areas. We should avoid holding these ambitions hostage to an unsure budget, as happened last time when the MFF was negotiated just before the CAP deal was finalised.

At the same time, if farmers are to make a transition to different ways of doing agriculture, they need to be supported in this – they are already squeezed by rising production costs and non-remunerative prices for their produce; that is the purpose of public funds. And for something as important as food security and autonomy it is well justified. The Green line is to keep the funding for the transition but it needs to be fundamentally rearranged to make it fit for the immense societal challenges we face, not least climate change.

On June 21st, EU Commissioners are set to hold preliminary discussions on a reflection paper on the future of EU finances up to 2025. The Greens/EFA call on the whole College of Commissioners to at least maintain CAP and rural development budgets and to invest substantially into a Copernican revolution: mitigate and adapt to impacts of climate change through biodiversity and job-creating food security and transition to a toxic-free future.

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