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DISCUSSION PAPER

CAP FUTURE: WHAT DO STAKEHOLDERS WANT?

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ABSTRACT

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is at the crossroads of several policy interests. It is scrutinised by farming and environmental communities as well as by the food industry, regional authorities, research and public sector. The paper analyses the recent consultation process undertaken by the European Commission. The paper concludes that among the key reform issues are: the level of the financial support to the CAP; the continued environmental and other public goods orientation of the CAP and generational renewal. In addition, the focus on result orientation and reduction of the administrative burden can be expected. The relevant European Commission proposals are foreseen around summer 2018.

Keywords: Agricultural policy, CAP reform, environmental goods, European Union
JEL: H41, Q01, Q13, Q18

INTRODUCTION

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) belongs to the oldest and most integrated parts of the policies of the EU. It is also a major recipient of funding from the EU budget. The CAP is, increasingly, a cross-sectorial policy with impact on environmental, social and economic parameters in rural areas and beyond. Food security and safety are dominant topics for consumers in the EU and it is increasingly a geostrategic concern.

The current CAP rules will be updated and modified as of 2020 within the framework of the next multiannual budget of the EU. The reflections on the course of the reform are currently published both in academic literature and by policy stakeholders in the CAP.

The paper provides an overview of the main topics under discussion. It also analyses the findings of a major public consultation process undertaken by the European Commission in 2017.

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

The literature on the CAP is abundant. Starting with the general issues, **the Rise foundation (2017)** calls for a reform based on the broader perspective. For them, the food system's challenges cannot be tackled only through the optic of agriculture but, through the entire food system. Focus on the contribution the CAP reform to help farmers make the unavoidable transition in land and risk management. The current CAP is not optimal as it is not sufficiently helping farmers to adapt to the new challenges ahead, such as climate change. CAP should be redefined and focused on results. The challenge is the practical implementation of the policy, for strengthening the long term sustainability of agriculture by focusing more effectively on supporting land uses that produce a wide range of services that include biodiversity, food production, conservation and carbon sequestration. In this broader context, **Erjavec and Lovec (2017)** studied how CAP research has shifted from market distortions to international trade and budgetary decision-making frameworks, as well as broader societal issues, such as food, environment and development and **Candel and Pereira (2017)** came to the conclusions that recent crises showed that existing food governance arrangements are falling short and that there is a need for integrated food policy.

The dominant research subject is the relation between the CAP and the environmental services provided. This subject was recently addressed by **Assandri *et al.* (2017), Baldock and Mottershead (2017), Toivonen *et al.* (2017), Drechsler and Wätzold (2017), Gamero *et al.* (2017), Langhammer *et al.* (2017), Lomba *et al.* (2014), Lomba *et al.* (2017), Runhaar (2017), Uthes *et al.* (2017), Warner *et al.* (2017)** to name a few.

Alons (2017) investigated the extent to which the CAP has contributed to a multidimensional concept Environmental Policy Integration (EPI). He argues that the EPI is included in the CAP to a limited extent due to an incomplete transformation in European agricultural policy from exceptionalism to post-exceptionalism. The increasing multidimensionality of agriculture with environmental, trade and food safety concerns, has mobilized new policy actors bringing new preferences and ideas into the CAP debate. **Leventon *et al.* (2017)** argue, based on empirical evidence collected through multi-stakeholder consultation, that the current system of agri-environment management in the European Common Agricultural Policy is ineffective at conserving biodiversity, as it promotes fragmentation instead of collaboration among farmers. Fragmentation is reinforced by the current CAP through targeting individual farmers, by creating confusion around coordination roles for increasing numbers of actors and by failing to engage with

barriers to collaboration among farmers. **Gocht *et al.* (2017)** as well as **Solazzo *et al.* (2017)** also confirmed that the CAP greening measures have small environmental impacts. Crop diversification CAP measures have a capacity to push large farms which would be otherwise non-compliant with crop rotation, as found out by **Louhichi *et al.* (2015)**. However, such an environmental benefit can lead to income decrease in the concerned farms. Their findings are supported also by the work of **Mahy *et al.* (2014)**.

Another salient research and policy issue is the CAP financing. **Helming and Tabeau (2017)** assessed the economic, environmental and agricultural land use impacts in the EU of a 20% reduction in the Pillar I budget of the CAP of the EU. They concluded that such reallocation would increase employment in agriculture and agricultural production, especially in agricultural sectors and regions that are relatively labour intensive. At the same time, prices of agricultural outputs would decrease.

CAP support to farmers has an impact on land rent and land allocation. **Michalek *at al.* (2014)** demonstrated that the CAP area payments are fully capitalised into land rents while price support depends on crop productivity. They also found out that both area payments and price support influence land allocation. **Feichtinger *et al.* (2013)** estimate that there is a 6% to 10% capitalisation rate of the area payment. **Brady *et al.* (2017)** studied the phenomenon of 'passive farming' following the decoupling of CAP direct payments, whereby landowners maintain their agricultural area to collect payments without producing commodities. They concluded that passive farming is not a problem for agriculture and preserves marginal farmland and future food security.
Following the closing of the public consultation on modernising and simplifying the CAP several think tanks have expressed their positions on the matter.

Copa-Cogeca (2017) called for a strong, common and adequately financed CAP that supports farmers delivering food security in the EU as well as providing safe, quality, nutritious food produced in a sustainable manner. The future CAP should be modern and simple. It should address the risk management for cases such as weather, pathogens or income pressure. Supply chain needs to be fairer for farmers. Sustainability of farming and continuation of farming are priorities, as well as, the generational challenge. **CEJA- European Council of Young Farmers (2017)** proposed that the next CAP reform should focus on generational renewal, sustainable economic support and proactive environmental measures. **FoodDrinkEurope (2017)** stated that the CAP should acknowledge the food and drink industry is increasingly committed to reducing the environmental impact of its own operations. Sustainable agricultural practices by farmers should be encouraged based on these voluntary initiatives to achieve policy objectives. Sharing of good practices and using research and innovation are seen as suitable tools to this end.

Coming to the issue of the market functioning, **EuroCommerce (2017)** suggested a better understanding of the process of value transmission in the food supply chain, generating more trust and greater understanding among stakeholder groups. The modern CAP should encourage the development of supply chain dialogue as a means of exchanging information among operators in the supply chain and helping farmers match their production to what consumers want to buy while, supply chain dialogue is also a means to create more trust among stakeholders. Market orientation of the CAP should be preserved while farmers' position in the supply chain needs to be reinforced via dialogue of the market actors.

On the environmental side, **WWF (2017)** was of the opinion that the current CAP is largely a result of policy priorities and instruments developed for the challenges of the past century and has strengthened resources on intensive farming, increasing pressure on nature and depleting the natural resources. Farming systems that provide more public goods have been marginalised by policy and a reform is necessary to meet the needs of farmers and citizens, in preserving the planet and securing sustainable food production for the future. **BirdLife Europe and European Environmental Bureau (2017)** examined the peer-reviewed evidence regarding the CAP's impacts on our society, the economy and the environment, assessing UN SD Goals and achieving their own objectives. The CAP has some successes in this respect but, it is highly inefficient and its acceptance by farmers and the public is exceptionally low. The CAP urgently needs clear and coherent, objectives, its monitoring and indicators are weak or missing to support policy outcome.

DATA AND METHODS

Public opinion on the future CAP is extrapolated from the public consultation on the future of the CAP named "Modernising and Simplifying the CAP". This consultation was conducted by the European Commission between 2 February 2017 and 2 May 2017. The consultation was organised through a questionnaire available in all EU languages on DG AGRI website and open to all interested citizens. The questionnaire contained 28 closed questions and 5 open questions. The analysis of the responses was made by an external consultant (Ecorys), with the exception of position papers, which a Task Force in DG AGRI examined. The outcome of the public consultation was presented during the conference "The CAP: Have your say" which took place in Brussels on 7 July 2017.

The consultation resulted in 322916 submissions and 1423 position papers, confirming the high level of interest in the CAP from the whole society, and not only the agricultural community. The number of replies has been the second highest in the history of EU public consultations, largely exceeding participation on the CAP future on previous occasions (for instance, the 2010 public debate reached 5700 submissions). However, that high number of submissions includes large organized campaigns, the biggest one conducted by Living Land, which generated 63295 responses. Once the submissions from campaigns were deducted, 58520 genuine replies from individuals and organizations were counted.

Responses were analysed according to three categories (farmers, other citizens and organizations) and

per Member State. Most contributions came from Germany (32509) followed by France (6666) and Austria (3962) (Table 1).

Farmers and agricultural micro-enterprises with 21386 responses made 36.54% of the overall total, while the percentage for other citizens was 47.66% and organizations 15.80% (private companies, public authorities, NGO's).

It is important to note that views differed between farmers and the other citizens as regards a number of issues. For instance, guaranteeing a fair standard of living - therefore, direct income support - was more important for the farmers than for citizens. The majority of citizens were more focused on the sustainability of agriculture and on benefits for the environment and climate, showing their concern that the CAP does not sufficiently address issues such as: protection of biodiversity, reduction of soil degradation, sustainable use of pesticides or preservation of genetic diversity. Answers from respondents from organizations vary according to the sector and the type of the organization, for example "lack of jobs and growth in rural areas" is the challenge most frequently selected by trade unions (52%). On other issues, however, both the farming community, organizations and the public at large agreed on, for instance, as regards improving the position of farmers in value chains (96% of all respondents agree).

RESULTS

The consultation process has demonstrated the importance of keeping a common EU policy on agriculture and rural development as well as its modernization and simplification. As regards the justification for the CAP at EU level, the key arguments that emerged from the consultation were the need to guarantee a level playing field within the Single Market and the existence of cross-border challenges like food security, environment or climate change.

The most pressing challenges that EU agriculture and rural areas are facing were a fair standard of living for farmers, the pressures on the environment and climate change and lack of jobs and growth. It became clear that a key challenge of the future CAP will be reaching environment and economy objectives simultaneously.

Table 1: Structure of responses on the CAP future consultation

Country	Respondents							
	Farmers		Other Citizens		Organisations		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Austria	2561	12.0	816	2.9	585	6.3	3962	6.8
Belgium	555	2.6	619	2.2	281	3.0	1455	2.5
Bulgaria	141	0.7	22	0.1	60	0.6	223	0.4
Croatia	39	0.2	53	0.2	17	0.2	109	0.2
Cyprus	3	0.0	6	0.0	2	0.0	11	0.0
Czech Republic	235	1.1	139	0.5	498	5.4	872	1.5
Denmark	119	0.6	141	0.5	40	0.4	300	0.5
Estonia	39	0.2	17	0.1	34	0.4	90	0.2
Finland	696	3.3	90	0.3	236	2.6	1022	1.7
France	1939	9.1	3241	11.6	1486	16.1	6666	11.4
Germany	10044	47.0	18615	66.7	3850	41.7	32509	55.6
Greece	40	0.2	53	0.2	21	0.2	114	0.2
Hungary	975	4.6	335	1.2	313	3.4	1623	2.8
Ireland	172	0.8	78	0.3	37	0.4	287	0.5
Italy	966	4.5	843	3.0	546	5.9	2355	4.0
Latvia	387	1.8	26	0.1	120	1.3	533	0.9
Lithuania	62	0.3	18	0.1	19	0.2	99	0.2
Luxembourg	26	0.1	47	0.2	11	0.1	84	0.1
Malta	1	0.0	3	0.0	3	0.0	7	0.0
Netherlands	227	1.1	322	1.2	111	1.2	660	1.1
Other	15	0.1	73	0.3	26	0.3	114	0.2
Poland	223	1.0	81	0.3	82	0.9	386	0.7
Portugal	84	0.4	169	0.6	69	0.7	322	0.6
Romania	79	0.4	88	0.3	103	1.1	270	0.5
Slovak Republic	35	0.2	38	0.1	38	0.4	111	0.2
Slovenia	15	0.1	15	0.1	14	0.2	44	0.1
Spain	1531	7.2	936	3.4	542	5.9	3009	5.1
Sweden	110	0.5	107	0.4	68	0.7	285	0.5
United Kingdom	67	0.3	902	3.2	29	0.3	998	1.7
Total	21386	100	27893	100	9241	100	58520	100

Source: ***European Commission, 2017***

On the environment, which appeared as one of the highlights from the consultation, the need for measures to be based on sound knowledge and evidence, e.g. improving databases on environment and more efficiently mobilizing the existing ones to help identify needs and best responses was high in the responses. In that respect, the fact that farmers themselves understand and see the benefits of their environmental efforts was underlined.
On the need for modernization of the EU agricultural sector, making new technologies such as remote sensing and precision farming accessible can also be very helpful with monitoring/self-assessment and control needs in the future.

On the barriers identified in becoming a farmer were access to land and low profitability.
Concerning the CAP policy tools best suited to meet the present challenges, for farmers support for RD environment and climate actions and for investments in physical/human capital were the most important ones. For citizens support for RD environment and climate actions were found to be twice as important as for farmers and support for RD investments in physical/human capital was the tool most frequently selected by organizations (Table 2).

A more detailed insight to the consultation results offer the following findings:

- more than 90% see the need for a commonly managed agricultural policy at EU level;
- 66% of participants agree with the need to provide income support for farmers (this percentage is higher among the farming community);
- 88% of respondents were aware of the lower level of farm income as compared to the EU average;
- 97% thought there is a need to improve the position of farmers in the food supply chain and combat unfair trading practices as farmers currently receive a limited share of prices consumers pay;
- 87% believe EU agricultural products have to respect stricter standards than imported ones;
- as regards climate change, there was consensus among stakeholders, notably between farmers and the public at large, on the following priorities: protection of biodiversity, reduction of soil degradation and a more sustainable use of pesticides and fertilizers;
- for 85% of participants the EU also emerges as the appropriate level of government to mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change; for 67% as the best level to address market uncertainties and 62% for encouraging the supply of healthy and quality products;
- only 7% of individuals from outside the farming community recognize the contribution of farmers as regards economic activity and employment in rural areas;
- only 9% of citizens recognize the role of farmers in ensuring enough availability of food and 20% in ensuring the health and welfare of farm animals;
- the above statistics raise the question on public knowledge of the CAP and, generally speaking, on farmers contribution, influence and overall importance.

Regarding the most important contributions of farmers to the EU society, the opinion of the farmers, other citizens and organizations vary (Table 3).

Looking at the implementation of the CAP toolbox and especially the red tape, the greening measures were indicated as the most burdensome element. In particular, it was the definition of permanent grassland and the Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs). Cross-compliance was also indicated as complex and burdensome while delivering only a limited positive benefit on the environment. The complexity of the applications for premiums, subsidies or grants were seen as another burdensome element of the CAP. Similarly, the controls were also identified as overly bureaucratic.

Considering the CAP reform, the consultation outcome showed that the most relevant issues differed according to the group of respondents. Boosting investment, growth and jobs was found more relevant for farmers and organizations, while climate change and environment considerations matter more for the public at large (Table 4).

Table 2: CAP policy tools best suited to meet the present challenges

Options	Farmers	Other citizens	Organisations	Total
Decoupled payments to farmers	10347	5473	4484	20304
Coupled support	7783	5910	3497	17190
Support for RD environment & climate actions in agriculture and rural areas	12149	23138	5193	40480
Support for RD investments in physical/human capital in agriculture and rural areas	12003	12247	5556	29806
Trade measures	5050	3376	1957	10383
Market safety nets(e.g. market intervention)	7450	4661	3208	15319
Risk management schemes	5776	4066	2457	12299
Support for integration into producers' organisations	4687	6947	1852	13486
Regulatory approaches (such as standards and rules)	2908	10628	1333	14869
Total	68153	76446	29537	174136

Source: ***European Commission, 2017***

Table 3: Benefits provided by agriculture sector to society (according to the segments of society)

Options	Farmers	Other Citizens	Organisations	Total
Ensuring that enough food is available	11069	6587	4936	22592
Supplying healthy, safe and diversified products	16766	20312	6942	44020
Protecting the environment and landscapes	10466	21288	4446	36200
Addressing climate change	2069	5773	889	8731
Contributing to renewable energy	3419	1620	1367	6406
Maintaining economic activity and employment in rural areas	10430	5172	4872	20474
Contributing to EU trade performance	1163	641	563	2367
Ensuring the health and welfare of farm animals	4896	15165	1676	21737
Total	60278	76558	25691	162527

Source: ***European Commission, 2017***

Table 4: Issues for the CAP according to the group of respondents

Options	Farmers	Other citizens	Organisations	Total
Boosting investment, growth and employment	14486	9549	6478	30513
Improving connectivity and digitalisation of the rural economy	8421	7002	3302	18725
Mitigating and adapting the impact of Climate Change and providing renewable energy	9043	20456	3760	33259
Strengthening the EU Single Market	10271	9310	4269	23850
Participating in World trade	4880	2032	2367	9279
Help addressing challenges related to migration	2880	7473	1201	11554
Total	49981	55822	21377	127180

Source: ***European Commission, 2017***

The results showed a clear consensus for a more performance-based CAP in the future in the direction of modernization and in continuing the ongoing efforts on simplification. Other issues where there was agreement among respondents were a reduction of overlaps between RD and other CAP measures (69%), a more extensive use of e-government services, a better use of databases & technologies to reduce farm inspections (63%) and increased choice to farmers when it comes to environmental measures (70%).

CONCLUSIONS

The agricultural policy in the EU proved to be a societal issue. The design of the agricultural policy is closely followed not only by farmers but, by the whole society due to horizontal aspects such as consumer protection, food quality and safety, environmental functions, employment and job creation, regional development of the rural areas, land protection and other aspects. This was demonstrated by the high participation rate and diversity of concerns coming out of the consultation process on the next CAP reform.

There are some clear signals coming from the consultation process. The level and form of the financial support, the continued environmental orientation of the CAP and generational renewal are among them. In addition, the future environment protection measures of the CAP are set to be more result oriented. Administrative burden both for the public sector and for the farmers is likely to be reduced. The relevant European Commission proposals are foreseen around summer 2018.

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