The EC calls for a more flexible, sustainable CAP with greater powers for the EE.MM

The European Commission calls for a more flexible, equitable and sustainable Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that guarantees the future of agriculture and food, as stated in a communication adopted on November 29th, which outlines the principles that go to allow this common EU policy, the oldest of all, to remain effective in the future.

> The adoption of simpler rules and a more flexible approach will contribute to the CAP providing real support to farmers and leading the sustainable development of EU agriculture

The aforementioned communication represents *an emblematic initiative that aims to provide the Member States with greater responsibilities when deciding how and where the CAP funding is invested, with a view to achieving a series of common and ambitious objectives related to the environment. environment, climate change and sustainability*.

In statements by Jyrki Katainen, Vice President responsible for Employment Promotion, Growth,

Investment and Competitiveness: "The common agricultural policy has been part of the menu since 1962. While we have to ensure that it continues to provide, for example, healthy and appetizing foods to consumers and generating jobs and growth in rural areas, the CAP also has to evolve along with the other policies. Our proposal is an important step towards the modernization and simplification of the CAP, taking into account the results of the extensive consultation held with interested parties. *The new implementation model introduced by the Commission emphasizes subsidiarity, since it is up to the Member States to draw up strategic CAP plans that will cover the measures envisaged under the first and second pillar, which will contribute to simplification, greater coherence and monitoring of the results».*

Phil Hogan, Commissioner responsible for Agriculture and Rural Development, said: "Today's Communication will ensure that the common agricultural policy makes it possible to achieve new and emerging objectives, such as promoting an intelligent and resilient agricultural sector, promoting the protection of the environment and climate action and strengthen the socio-economic fabric of rural areas.

> Hogan: "a new implementation system will be established, with a much greater degree of subsidiarity at the level of the Member States and the regions"

Although the current structure of two pillars is maintained, within this simpler and more flexible approach, specific measures will be set to achieve the objectives agreed at EU level. Next, each Member State will draw up its own strategic plan, approved by the Commission, where it will set out how it plans to achieve the objectives in question. *Greater attention will be paid to monitoring the progress made and securing targeted finance, rather than focusing on compliance aspects.*

> The substitution of an equal approach for all by an approach tailored to each means that there will be greater proximity between this policy, with its impact on real life, and those who apply it on the ground

The aid to farmers will be maintained through the system of direct payments. The Communication does not prejudge either the outcome of the debate on the future of EU finances or the content of the proposal on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). Without wishing to be exhaustive, it explores some possibilities to contribute to more adequately and equitably sustaining farmers' income.

Climate change and pressures on natural resources will continue to affect agriculture and food production, *so the future CAP should be more ambitious in terms of resource efficiency, environmental protection and action. because of the weather.*

Other proposals of interest are the following:

• **Encourage the use of modern technologies** to assist farmers in the field and bring greater transparency and security to the market
• **Encourage more young people to engage in farming**, in coordination with the competences of the Member States in areas such as land valuation, planning and capacity building
• **Respond to the concerns of citizens in relation to sustainable agricultural production**, also covering issues such as health, nutrition, food waste and animal welfare
• **Establish concerted action between EU policies in line with their global dimension**, particularly in the areas of trade, migration and sustainable development
• **Create an EU-wide platform on risk management**, to best assist farmers to cope with climate hazards, market volatility and other risks

> The relevant legislative proposals to give effect to the objectives outlined in the Communication will be presented by the Commission before the summer of 2018, following the MFP proposal

Reactions of the Spanish agrarian sector

Reactions by organizations of the Spanish agricultural sector to this communication from the EC on the CAP have not been long in coming. COAG dismisses Machiavellian and warns how *"after apparently laudable and sustainable objectives, masks a cut in aid and greater deregulation of markets"*. "*The experience of previous reforms of the CAP confirms that showcase policies dyed green do not guarantee decent rents or fair prices for farmers and do not reinforce the position of producers in the agrifood value chain*. It is contradictory to want to address new and big challenges with less budget ", underlined Miguel Blanco, Secretary General of COAG.

For this organization, *this document raises as first unknown the absence of a financial framework for the next CAP, and this despite the fact that they want to be much more ambitious in the objectives to be addressed, especially in everything related to the environment and climate change*.

Reference is made to the "Document of reflection on the future of the European Union's finances", where a gap in the EU's finances is observed, derived from the withdrawal of the United Kingdom and the financing needs of the new priorities. The United Kingdom contributed so far with net contributions of between € 10,000 and € 12,000 million annually to European funding. *In this document, the European Commission asks to explore the option of introducing a certain degree of national co-financing for direct payments, in order to maintain the overall levels of aid. COAG rejects this approach and defends a strong CAP, common and financed entirely with the EU budget, as befits the only common EU policy*.

In the same line, from UPA is claimed "a powerful PAC with sufficient budget and remember that thanks to it "we enjoy the best agri-food system on the planet". From this agrarian union regrets that the European Commission continues with certain vices that are not positive, such as giving more power to the States to customize the CAP or continue referring to a simplification that is not such.

> UPA rejects that EE.MM is given more capacity to adapt and customize the CAP, since this policy "is better if it is more common", with equal rules for all, without prejudice to the fact that it can take into account specific national aspects or regional

Regarding direct payments to farmers and ranchers, UPA believes that "they are totally necessary" to achieve the objectives pursued by the CAP, which should not be other than promoting and maintaining a "safe, sufficient and quality" agri-food system. "*European farmers and ranchers want to continue being suppliers of the healthiest and safest foods on the planet, in addition to managing most of the community territory", it said. "But if we want it to be possible, direct payments must continue". Otherwise, it regrets, "the European consumer would depend on imports from third countries, whose production standards are far from ours*".

On the other hand, UPA has celebrated that the European Commission proposes to incorporate the mechanisms of redistribution of helps that this organization "takes many years requesting", so that these go to the agriculturalists and graziers of familiar character, that are more professional and that more employment generate

On the other hand, from the sector of the agri-food cooperatives *they denounce that this proposal on the CAP forgets the market, limiting the maintenance of the profitability of the producers to the concession of a direct payment that would be conditioned by the community budget. In short, European market management instruments are completely ignored, leaving the rebalancing of the value chain in the air*.

> Agri-food Cooperatives: If the farms are not profitable in the market, where most of their income comes from, the producers will not have the capacity to make the investments in innovation necessary to maintain competitiveness

A lack of profitability that would also affect their capacity to adapt to the great change in the productive and energy model that is coming and that the Commission has pointed out as a fundamental objective.

For agri-food cooperatives, the new PAC must promote the organization and concentration of the producer sector through producer organizations of a business nature, with the aim of strengthening its position in the agri-food value chain.

> The cooperatives consider it a priority to design public and private market management instruments that help mitigate price volatility

It is also pointed out that, in the EC communication, the financial instruments and crop and income insurance are not developed or adapted to the challenge of achieving a profitable and attractive productive activity, *so the Communication does not propose real management measures for crisis.*

Cooperativas Agro-alimentarias fears that by giving the Member States greater powers to agree on national objectives consistent with a European strategy agreed with the Commission, whose results they will have to justify later, it means the end of the common policy and a serious damage to the functioning of the European single market.

It also recalls that the debate on the CAP will be very sensitive to the EU budget and the impact of Brexit, which is why he advocates an agri-food and European CAP, with a specific solid budget and complementary with other instruments, since "*the EU does not can pretend to pay their new objectives with a budget of PAC already very reduced*".

Source: Office of the European Commission in Spain

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