



Copa and Cogeca Vision for Future of EU Agriculture: From Field to Future

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General

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Background: Vision for Agriculture and Food

Ursula von der Leyen, Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024-2029 (18th July)

*“I will present a **Vision for Agriculture and Food in the first 100 days** looking at how to ensure the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of our farming sector within the boundaries of our planet”*



Background: Vision for Agriculture and Food:

Mission Letter Christophe Hansen, Commissioner designate for Agriculture and Food (17th September)

Your priority is to strengthen the **competitiveness, resilience and sustainability** of the agricultural sector. We need to understand the concerns of people in rural communities and come up with solutions that will make a real difference. I want you to ensure this is a collective effort, with all voices heard, following up on report and recommendations from the **Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture in the EU**.

- Building on the recommendations of the Strategic Dialogue and in consultation with the future European Board for Agriculture and Food, you will prepare in the first 100 days a **Vision for Agriculture and Food**, working under my guidance and in coordination with other Members of College. This should look at how to ensure the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of our farming and food sector within the boundaries of our planet. It should also look at food waste and promotion of cutting-edge science, innovative technologies and emerging products in the agri-food sector.
- As part of this, you will **ensure that our future common agricultural policy is fit for purpose** in order to provide targeted support to farmers who need it most, notably small-scale farmers, promote positive environmental and social outcomes through rewards and incentives for ecosystem services and to support the right enabling conditions for **thriving rural areas**. You will ensure the efficient and effective **implementation** of the policy to ensure it is simpler, targeted and finds the right balance between incentives, investments and regulation.
- In all of your work will ensure that farmers have a **fair and sufficient income**. You will engage to strengthen farmers' position within the food value chain and **protect farmers against unfair trading practice**, notably to ensure they are not forced to systematically sell their products below production costs.
- You will design and deploy a **new approach to deliver on sustainability** to support farmers in decarbonisation and preserving biodiversity. As part of this, you

will propose an **EU-wide benchmarking system** in the agri-food sector, as recommended by the Strategic Dialogue. You will also explore possibilities to support the **organic farming** sector.

- To support the competitiveness of our entire food value chain, you will work closely with Member States, farmers and industry to foster **investment and innovation**. You will work in partnership with Member States and financial institutions, such as the European Investment Bank, to **leverage and de-risk private capital**.
- You will present a **strategy for generational renewal in agriculture**, notably supporting family farms and young farmers to access capital.
- To prepare for the future, you will also contribute to developing of appropriate instruments for **climate risk preparedness** and crisis management and you will ensure that the needs of rural areas are specifically catered for. In this context, I expect you to contribute actively to the Climate Adaptation Plan and the **European Water Resilience Strategy**.
- As part of work to strengthen Europe's **food sovereignty**, I would like you to work closely with other relevant Members of College to look at ways to further diversify and reduce imports of critical inputs and commodities. You will work with the Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security towards reciprocity and an international level playing field.
- As part of your work in addressing the specific challenges of **rural areas**, I would like you to focus on addressing the targeted spread of disinformation in rural areas.
- You will contribute to the **pre-enlargement policy reviews** and work closely with the Commissioner for Enlargement, Member States, candidate countries and stakeholders to discuss the future of agriculture in a larger Union.



Copa and Cogeca Vision for Future of EU Agriculture



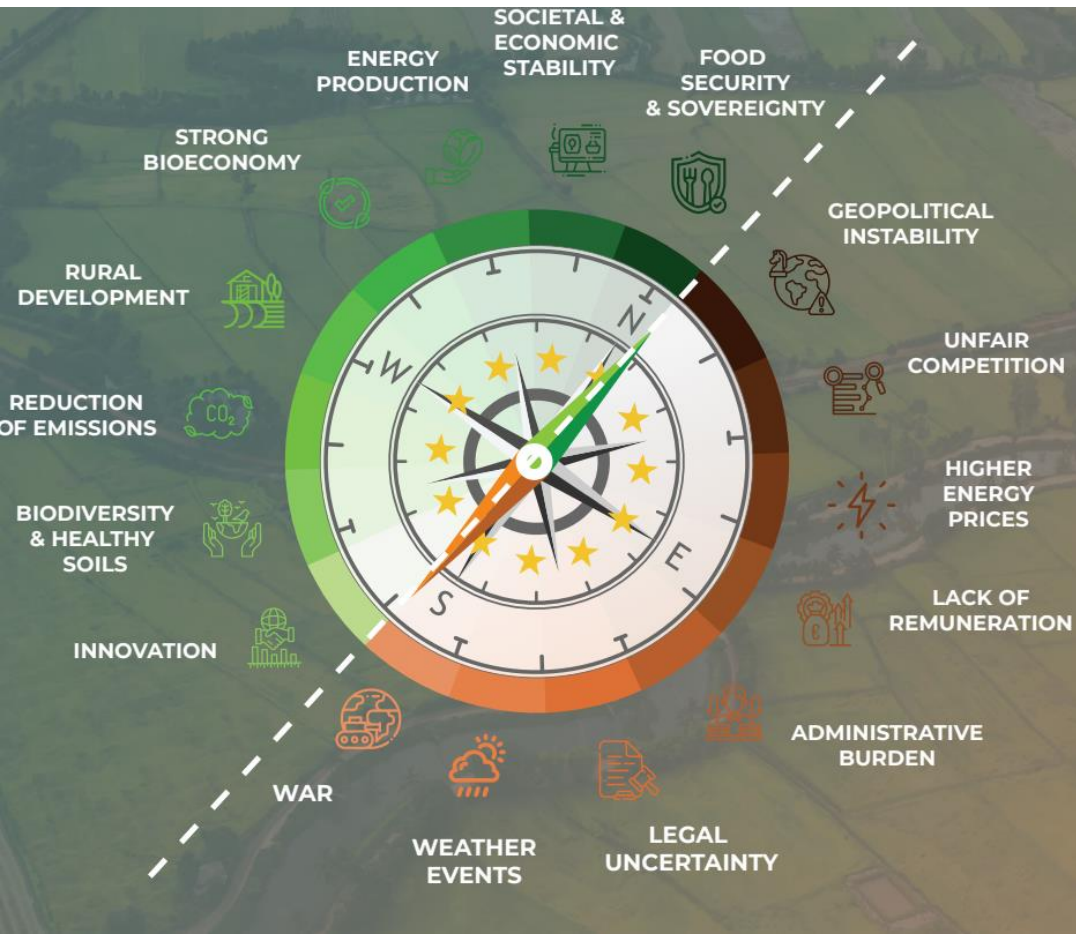
Adopted Copa-Cogeca Joint Praesidia 26.11.2024

Democratic and participated process:

- ✓ 40 contributions from farmers and agri-coops national organizations
 - ✓ 6 dedicated meetings
 - ✓ All Copa-Cogeca Working Parties (WP) involved
 - ✓ 17 WP presentations
- **RoadMap** for the next mandate =>**further detailed positions** (i.e. CAP)

A Vision that puts farmers and agri-cooperatives at the center

FARMERS AND AGRI-COOPS OFFER TO SOCIETY.....
BUT FACE MANY CHALLENGES



FAIR COMPETITIVENESS TOWARDS 2050 AND BEYOND



Turning challenges into opportunities

EU Institutions: Preserve and create **future prospects until 2050**=>stability, predictability, trust, legal certainty and consistency

- Geopolitical **instability**, unfair competition, **higher energy prices**, lack of **remuneration**, **administrative burdens**, legal uncertainty and decreased consumption patterns
- In recent decades, the agricultural sector has made **significant strides** in increasing **productivity**, **reducing CO2 emissions**, and using fewer veterinary antibiotics, Plant Protection Products
- **Top down down approach** => target rather than means, lack of impact assessment, financing
- **Farmers protest** =>shift the focus back to rural areas and agriculture
- Actions now to **avoid changes irreversible loss of farming community** (going beyond a tipping point)
- EU Institutions need to regain **agriculture sector trust**

We expect to translate the strategic importance of sector into concrete actions



11 Key pathways for the Future of EU Agriculture



Simplification and new Governance: Farmers and agri-cooperatives as protagonists of EU policies


We advocate for a shift in governance to enhance the involvement of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the EU decision-making process and call for:


-  **Reduction of Bureaucracy:** reduce current administrative burdens and stop additional ones from materialising to rule out any new legislation which would lead to more; it should go hand in hand with a commitment by the European Commission to simplifying existing regulations.
-  **Greater Participation:** Ensuring comprehensive participation of farmers in consultations and decision-making, with a focus on the role of Copa and Cogeca as major organisations in representing EU farming. Agricultural Civil Dialogue Groups (CDGs) should be strengthened as they are key in current and future policy discussion.
-  **Transparency and Democratic Processes:** A commitment from EU Institutions to democratic decision-making and transparency in policymaking, with active participation from stakeholders of the agriculture sector and economic operators, in all consultative bodies such as the European Board of Agriculture and Food (EBAF) when established.
-  **Economic and Social Impact Assessments:** Any agricultural policy proposals should include detailed economic, social, legal, scientific assessments to gauge their impact on food security and rural areas.




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Increased funding of CAP budget line and additional funding outside CAP for additional requirements

 We call for **an increased CAP budget in the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)** - separated and independent - to reflect inflation and the growing demands on agriculture. The CAP currently accounts for just 0.4% of the EU's GDP despite agriculture contributing 1.3% of EU GDP. Any idea of reallocating EU expenditures into a single fund for each Member State would undermine targeted support for agriculture, increase complexity and uncertainty for farms, fragment the Single Market, and widen differences between Member States.

 **Additional Funds:** by establishing an Agriculture Just Transition Fund (AJTF) and a Nature Restoration Fund to support investments and sustainable transitions across farming sectors. The funds should be managed by agriculture governance, not have an impact on the CAP Budget allocations which need to be protected and ringfenced for the farming community while keeping the flexibility within the budget.

 **Investment in Lending Frameworks:** We also call for better access to financial resources through initiatives like the European Investment Bank's 2024-2027 roadmap, with a focus on bioeconomy and agriculture.

 **Role in Sustainable Finance:** Farmers and agri-cooperatives should have a voice in shaping policies on sustainable finance, especially in legislation such as CSRD (Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive) and the Taxonomy Regulation.



3

Strengthen the CAP to ensure the competitiveness of EU agriculture and improve farmers' position in the food chain

The CAP should be reinforced to ensure the competitiveness of EU agriculture and must:


-  **Maintain direct support for all farmers under the CAP regardless of their size and type of production.** This relates in particular to the form of area-based direct payments. For Copa-Cogeca those that need it most are the active farmers, those who help make European agricultural production sustainable, achieve objectives across all pillars of sustainability (environmental, social and economic) and meet the objectives of ensuring food sovereignty in the EU, of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, regardless of size, location or the nature of production and keeping vibrant rural areas. **Ability to support sectors in difficulty** and/or with specific constraints must be maintained. **CAP conditionality requirements should be re-assessed** to reduce excessive implementation requirements, administrative burden and costs.
-  **Risk Management:** Member States should enhance risk management tools to help farmers cope with extreme weather events and market disruptions. Complementary EU common tools should be exploited to boost the effectiveness of these measures in light of the more frequent and extreme weather events.
-  **Immediate actions should include enforcing stronger protections against UTPs, particularly in cross-border transactions, revising the CMO regulation,** and banning below-cost selling by 2025 to ensure fairer farmer remuneration. Monitoring through initiatives like the EU Agri-Food Chain Observatory is crucial to ensure effective implementation.
-  **Promoting farmer cooperation through cooperatives, and creating legal flexibility for agricultural producers,** that can improve farmers' market positions. Streamlining certification processes like Global Gap will alleviate pressures on farmers, while encouraging short value chains and farmers' markets offers better market outlets and helps reduce food waste. These measures are integral to supporting sustainability and achieving fairer, more efficient agricultural practices across the EU.




Balancing economic, environmental, social sustainability


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Copa and Cogeca propose a balanced sustainability that is guaranteed to allow agriculture to contribute to the EU's economic, environmental and social goals with:

 **Strategic Climate Policy for Agriculture:** A climate policy that balances sustainability goals with food security and economic resilience, using existing legislative tools to achieve climate and economic objectives.

 A harmonized **EU-wide system for certified carbon removals and greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions**, encouraging farmers to adopt carbon farming practices.

 **Water and Biodiversity Management:** Proposals include more realistic pathways for farmers to manage water quality, environmental standards, and biodiversity, along with strategies for a water-resilient agriculture sector.

 **Livestock Sector Strategy:** It is time for a positive outlook that encourages farmers from all types of animal production to grow, improve and take pride in their work. More specifically:

- Animal-sourced foods play an essential role in human nutrition, contributing significantly to food and nutritional security and being advantageous for demographics with elevated nutritional needs.

- Livestock production plays a central role in European agriculture. Both livestock and plant production are interdependent






 Balanced **market-driven development** of the organic sector.



5

Seizing and enhancing the immense opportunities offered by knowledge and technological innovation

To strive towards a competitive and sustainable form of agriculture, it is necessary to promote a modern vision of agriculture and innovative ways of farming and breeding. This vision must be the milestone and the core of any decisions for the sector:




-  **Faster Regulatory Processes for Plant Protection:** The regulatory approval process for new, safe and effective plant protection products should be substantially sped up to enhance competitiveness. Growers are in an emergency situation. No active substance should be withdrawn without an equally effective alternative being present on the market for farmers.
-  A balanced, science-based regulatory framework should support **innovation in plant breeding, including new genomic techniques (NGTs)**.
-  **Data Utilisation and Decision Support Systems:** The use of data in agriculture should be expanded, including tools like Decision Support Systems (DSS) to improve management and economic sustainability.
-  Strengthening collaboration between **farmer organisations, research institutions and private companies** is crucial for accelerating innovation and transferring technology to farmers.
-  **Enhanced Advisory Services:** Strengthening farm advisory services and peer-to-peer knowledge exchanges will help farmers adopt sustainable practices.



6

Boost the contribution of EU farmers to renewable energy, and further develop the EU circular bioeconomy



Agriculture can contribute to the EU's renewable energy goals through bioenergy and sustainable practices:

-  **Technological Neutrality:** A coherent approach to energy policies should be adopted that recognizes the potential of bioenergy, crop-based biofuels, and biogas, while promoting on-farm renewable energy solutions like solar power.
-  **Promotion of Bioeconomy:** Bioeconomy should be integral to the EU's transition away from fossil fuels, promoting renewable energy from agricultural products.
-  **Fertilisers:** the EU should ensure a secure, competitive fertiliser supply while promoting diversification of sources by imports and sustainability in sourcing (i.e. Renure technologies) to support agriculture and food security.

Strengthen the resilience and competitiveness of cooperative enterprises operating in the agri-food sector

7



Agricultural cooperatives are central to improving farmers' positions in the food chain and supporting sustainable agriculture:

-  **Support for Cooperatives:** EU institutions should provide tailored support for agri-cooperatives, focusing on enabling regulations and support schemes.
-  **Innovation-Driven Policy:** Agricultural cooperatives should be supported to innovate and engage in science-based sustainability projects that maximise their contributions to sustainable growth.

8

Invest and innovate in vibrant rural areas by improving infrastructure and services



The vitality of rural areas is essential for EU agriculture:

-  **Improving Rural Infrastructure:** Investments in infrastructure, such as healthcare, education, mobility, and broadband, are needed to enhance the quality of life in rural areas and combat demographic decline.
-  **Rural Training and Strengthening the role of women in rural areas:** Programs should be established to improve the economic activity of farmers and cooperatives, along with initiatives to acknowledge the essential positive impact women, entrepreneurship and promoting work-life balance in rural areas.

A strategy for generation renewal in agriculture and in agri-cooperatives rooted in driving up the competitiveness of our farms

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To guarantee generational renewal, economic prospects must be within reach. No new farmers will enter the sector without the prospect of staying in the market even if provided with all the necessary setting-up tools:



-  **Support for Young Farmers:** Measures like loan packages, improved tax conditions, and educational initiatives should be implemented to support young and women entrepreneur farmers.
-  **Farm Succession Plans:** Targeted measures should be explored to facilitate farm succession and support new farmers entering the sector.



10

Providing safe, nutritious, high-quality, and affordable food to EU consumers

Food security and safety must remain a priority:

-  The European Union must continue to **uphold its high food safety standards while actively combatting food fraud.**
-  Enforcing Regulation (EU) 1169/2011 is critical in guaranteeing that **food information is transparent, scientifically based, and trustworthy.** To this end, **extend mandatory origin labelling, with an EU/non-EU level as starting baseline,** to all foodstuffs, while allowing for necessary flexibility for sectors to adopt a higher level of mandatory origin labelling (i.e., country of origin).
-  The EU should establish **legal protections for the names of animal-sourced foods, similar to protections already in place for dairy products,** to prevent the misuse of agricultural-related terms and avoid misleading comparisons.
-  An **inclusive and well-funded promotion policy** that equally and proportionately supports all sectors and sustainable agricultural practices.



Fair Trade Policy: a key pillar for an ambitious and competitive sector

The EU's trade policy should be aligned with the interests of farmers and agri-cooperatives by:

-  **Reevaluate and carefully calibrate the way trade agreements are negotiated** and concluded.
-  **Ensuring fair trade which guarantees reciprocity in terms of production standards.** At the same time, depending on the third countries and building on internationally agreed standards the EU should play an active international role in global trade ensuring market access with balanced trade agreements.
-  **Any trade agreement needs to have compulsory commitment from third countries on standards** linked to animal welfare, the use of medicines in animal production, climate, chemical treatment, and other environmental international, EU standards in line with WTO rules. **It is equally important not to accept an agreement with Mercosur** or any other agreement that disregards key concerns of farmers on the divergence of production standards and on the cumulative effects on sensitive sectors.
-  **Further engagement with international partners in the World Trade Organization (WTO)** and other multilateral fora is crucial.

The farming community recognises that **the EU enlargement** is linked to the prosperity and stability of Europe and key for the global geopolitical context.

Any future enlargement should be managed in a way that minimises its impact on EU farmers and agri-cooperatives and which guarantees an adequate transition period with specific requirements to allow production and markets to adapt, thus preventing shocks.

The temporary trade liberalisation measures for Ukraine started in June 2022, which were then extended in 2023 and 2024, resulted in a massive increase in Ukrainian agricultural products imports which severely impacted EU producers, especially in the cereals/oilseeds, poultry, egg, honey and sugar sectors. A solution should be found that allows exports to continue, provided the pace and permitted volumes are manageable and can be absorbed by the European market without destabilising its producers.





Thank you for your attention!



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