

Food policy and the CAP

- The question of whether the EU needs a food policy has been an important subject of debate in recent years.
- Thank the Dutch Presidency for facilitating this debate today.
- The paper by the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy's is a very good contribution to this debate.
- It's clear that **a strong, viable and diverse agriculture** is an essential ingredient of food policy.
- And I would argue that European policy plays a key role in supporting sustainable production, processing, trade and the consumption of safe and nutritious food.
- I think we can be proud that European agriculture makes healthy food available to consumers.
- **However, it's not for Brussels, or of the CAP, to tell people what to eat.**

The European Union has a food policy

- There are many policies and initiatives that support and underpin an EU policy on food. Take for example the fact that:
 - Sustainability which is at the heart of any food policy - is very much at the heart of the CAP;
 - Our approach to Food Safety – which includes the strict regulatory framework and independent risk assessments from EFSA - provide a food safety system that is amongst the very best in the world;
 - While the Treaties give the Union a limited role in public health, public health considerations do play an important role in relation to food safety, which in turn naturally has a very important impact on public health.
 - Rules on food information for consumers, labelling of origin, geographical indications all play a vital role in ensuring the consumer is informed;
 - We are determined to ensure that the food supply chain works fairly for all partners in the chain. This is something that Commissioner HOGAN is particularly keen to push.
 - Rules on how food is produced are also an important element – EU animal welfare rules, environmental and climate policy all provide an important framework for food production – these are areas where a lot more work will have to be done in the years to come;

Just a few words on the Circular Economy.

- As you know, the Commission adopted a circular economy package in December last year. It is clear that a circular economy is an essential part of a sustainable food economy and Agriculture will play a prominent role in delivering on its objectives.
- Farmers, rural communities, as well as public authorities must step up their efforts in finding more ways to recycle nutrients. Research and knowledge sharing are crucial in this context. Research must involve farmers.
- We also have to look into new ways of getting food waste back into the production cycle.

CAP as a food policy

- The CAP plays a central role in making food accessible. The success of the policy can be seen in the value of our trade, with EU agri exports worth around EUR 219 billion in 2015.
- The CAP also has schemes which directly encourage consumption of nutritious food; the school food scheme, quality schemes and organic production.
- The school food scheme provides for the distribution of healthy products such as fruit, vegetables and milk in schools and it also supports national policies on nutrition, as well as efforts to reduce diet-related problems.
- The importance of education in instilling good diets is recognised by the EU scheme which also includes nutrition counselling and in-school campaigns. This is complemented by the awareness raising efforts of DG SANTE's platform for action on diet.
- EU quality schemes identify products and foodstuffs farmed and produced to a high standard.

- The EU has created three protection schemes:

geographical indications (Protected Designation of Origin and Protected Geographical Indication),

Traditional Specialities Guaranteed

and **Optional Quality Terms**.

To date more than 3000 product names have been registered under the EU's quality labels for agricultural products and foodstuff (PDO and PGI).

- The organic sector is growing in importance. The organic market has quadrupled in size over the past 10 years. With the recent CAP reform, we have created a new organic farming measure which provides payments for conversion to or for maintenance of organic farming, in response to growing demand.

Sustainability dimension of the CAP

- As well as being a food policy of the highest quality, the CAP is now a central part of the EU's strategies for sustainability. Natural resources and ecosystems are the basis for agricultural production, so it is clear that a sustainable and efficient use of resources is essential for agriculture. It's at the core of the reformed CAP.
- Since 2014, CAP policy instruments address a variety of environmental, climate and sustainability goals. The aim is to significantly improve the environmental performance of EU agriculture and at the same time contribute to the provision of private and public goods.
- Specifically, the following elements are now a mandatory part of the reformed CAP: cross compliance, greening and the requirement to use at least 30% rural development programmes on a list of measures benefitting the environment or adaptation to climate change.

- It is also remarkable that we are clearly overshooting this requirement: as things stand, a total of 49 % of rural development programmes have been earmarked for environmental/climate measures. This level of ambition should be welcomed, and burnishes the EU's global leadership credentials on sustainability and climate issues.
- The next steps consist of two processes
 - In the short to medium term, the Commission is taking strong action to simplify the CAP to reduce the burden on farmers; Commissioner Hogan made this a key priority last year and has done the same this year; a broad and comprehensive public consultation on Greening closed this week and a package of measures is expected in June.
 - In the medium to long term, there will be comprehensive monitoring to evaluate the effects and performance of "Greening"; in 2017, for example, there will be a review of the Ecological Focus Area system and further evaluations of the CAP objectives.

Research

- Seeking new research results and translating their findings into practice will boost competitiveness and sustainability at the same time:
 - Through Horizon 2020, our framework programme for research and innovation, we have doubled our efforts on food, agriculture, forestry and marine research to reach €3.6 billion for the period 2014 to 2020.
 - The new Rural Development Programmes support innovation, through collaboration and networking, but also through synergies with the "European Innovation Partnership for agriculture" to speed up innovation on the ground.

- And we are looking ahead: Building on the insights from Expo 2015 we launched a process to create a long-term strategy for EU agricultural research and innovation; it was discussed among hundreds of experts and stakeholders at a recent two day conference in Brussels and will be finalised in the next few weeks.

Civil Dialogue Groups (CDGs)

- It is very good that both the European Public Health Alliance and the European Environment Bureau are Members of our Civil Dialogue Group as it provides an excellent opportunity for further exchange of views on these and other important subjects .

