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*Thank you very much for your letter of 22 March 2016 requesting a Fitness Check for the CAP. President Juncker and First Vice President Timmermans asked me to answer on their behalf.*

*You raise in this letter several important aspects for the future of European agriculture which deserve to be discussed in detail. I am happy to engage in this discussion with you because we all have to work together for allowing European farmers to continue their important role in providing safe and healthy food, in boosting economic growth in rural areas while taking care of our countryside.*

*Being responsible for the CAP and an important associated budget, I am aware that we have to show that the policy is delivering the benefits to society that our citizens and taxpayers can expect. You highlight rightly some of the most challenging trends and you flag the need to know how the CAP impacts on them. These questions are not new and we are ready to start this discussion.*

*You also ask in your letter that the Commission should highlight and explain more clearly the achievements of the CAP and enter into an assessment whether the CAP is delivering towards objectives. I welcome this discussion for which we have prepared to make the necessary information and evidence available. This should allow for an informed debate and I am happy to take the next opportunities to discuss with you.*

*The Commission has put in place - together with the Member States - a Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the CAP. This framework will provide solid information on the results of our policy while taking into account the challenges and the context in which the CAP operates. The policy impact will be measured in relation to the overarching objectives of the CAP: viable food production, sustainable management of natural resources and climate action, and balanced territorial development.*

*Thus, progress on getting necessary information has been made, but yet more remains to be done to provide the optimal information on performance of the policy and shaping our dialogue. Data collection takes time and, indeed, it also takes time before the data from Member States will actually reflect the impact of our policy changes. The implementation of the last CAP reform only started in January 2015.*

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*A number of external evaluations during the next two years will be dedicated to CAP objectives looking at all relevant CAP measures (first and second pillar measures). The questions of effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and EU value added are indispensable questions for every EU-funded evaluation and they will be taken up in this exercise.*

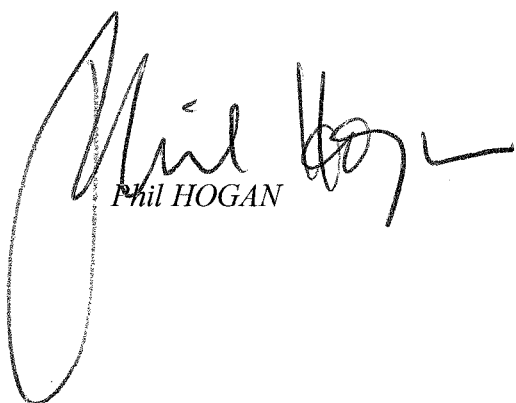
*Based on these evaluations, external studies and our Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, the Commission will present a report on the performance of the CAP to the Council and the European Parliament in 2018 as well as in 2021, in accordance with Art. 110 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013.*

*In addition, the stakeholder group of the REFIT Platform has identified agriculture as one of their priority areas and indicated its interest to prepare an opinion on your suggestions regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of the CAP. As per your submission, these suggestions also include launching a Fitness Check on the CAP to ensure it delivers on its objectives of viable food production, sustainable management of natural resources and balanced territorial development and to improve its cost-efficiency. You can follow the work of the REFIT Platform on dedicated website created for this purpose.*

*In all efforts to discuss and assess the CAP, we still need to distinguish those elements on which the CAP has an influence and those elements that are beyond reach. Several elements you mentioned in your letter cannot be addressed by the CAP only. Just to mention one example: healthy dietary patterns are influenced by complex, culturally determined tastes and preferences where education of citizens plays the most crucial role in diet shifts.*

*I would also like to invite you to engage actively in events and conferences on the future of European agriculture and rural areas and the role of the CAP. The upcoming Cork conference in September and the Outlook conference in December 2016 might be good occasions in this context and I hope to see some of you there.*

*Yours sincerely,*

  
Phil HOGAN