



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

7.1.2010

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Hearing with Mr Dacian CIOLOȘ, Commissioner-designate for Agriculture and Rural Development

Please find enclosed the written answers sent by Mr Dacian CIOLOȘ.

The Secretariat

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United in diversity

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ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

FOR COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE

Dacian CIOLOȘ

(Agriculture and Rural Development)

General competence, European commitment and personal independence

- 1. What aspects of your personal qualifications and experience are particularly relevant for becoming Commissioner and promoting the European general interest, particularly in the area you would be responsible for? What motivates you? What guarantees of independence are you able to give the European Parliament, and how would you make sure that any past, current or future activities you carry out could not cast doubt on the performance of your duties within the Commission?**

I consider myself, both personally and professionally, to be a product of the opening up of the European Union to the East. I completed my professional training and developed my professional activity against the background of EU enlargement, which helped forge my personal and professional convictions. I am an agronomist by profession. I chose to specialise in rural economics and environmental engineering, focusing on agricultural production systems and rural development.

My professional activity has allowed me to work at grassroots level, with farmers and rural organisations, and in the field of international cooperation for agricultural development. It also led to my employment at the Romanian government administration, where I was involved in EU agriculture negotiations and later at policy level.

This professional and political experience, which has been strongly marked by Europe and European integration, successive EU enlargements and the strengthening of Community policies, has firmly convinced me that European integration is happening not just at the top but also at grassroots level, through concrete measures geared towards those for whom Europe is a day-to-day reality. The field which I will be responsible for coordinating within the Barroso II Commission is exemplary in this respect.

My career has been devoted to agriculture and rural development. My declaration of interests laid down in the Code of Conduct for Commissioners, which is accessible to the public, shows that I have no personal interests linked to any economic activity in the area for which I will be responsible within the Commission. It goes without saying that I undertake to keep my declaration of interests up to date.

Being a Commissioner means serving Europe and forging its future. This calls for impartiality and a quest for the common good. I am aware of the obligations laid down in Article 17(3) of the Treaty on European Union, which states that Commissioners must not take instructions from any government. I undertake to adhere scrupulously to this principle.

I also solemnly undertake to comply with the ethical standards laid down in Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and in the Code of Conduct for Commissioners throughout my term as member of the Commission and in my subsequent professional activity in order to avoid any situation that could call into question my independence, impartiality and availability to the Commission.

Finally, I undertake to notify the President of the Commission of any situation relating to me which could entail a conflict of interests in the performance of my duties.

Management of the portfolio and cooperation with the European Parliament and its committees

2. How would you assess your role as a Member of the College of Commissioners? In what respect would you consider yourself responsible and accountable to the Parliament for your actions and for those of your departments?

As Commissioner Designate for agriculture and rural development, I will be responsible for ensuring implementation of the policies, legal acts and budget of this particular EU policy and proposing to modernise it in the general interest of the citizens of Europe, so that agricultural and rural development policy remains one of the pillars of European integration.

If I am confirmed as a member of the College of Commissioners, I will play an active role in the decision-making required to ensure the implementation of the policy programme presented to the European Parliament by the President of the Commission.

As a member of the European Commission, I will be committed to defending and promoting European values, especially among the Member States and non-governmental organisations, but also vis-à-vis the EU's partners at global level.

As Commissioner for agriculture and rural development, I undertake to perform my duties in this field in a spirit of trust, loyalty and transparency towards my cabinet and the competent Directorate-General, and in accordance with the principle of Commission collegiality. I thus intend to perform my duties as Commissioner for agriculture and rural development and as a member of the College in cooperation with the other members of the College of Commissioners.

I wish to assure the European Parliament that I will be at all times open to constructive political dialogue based on mutual trust, transparency and the exchange of information. I will be ready to meet the requests of Parliament and I also intend to inform it, on my own initiative, of my ideas and intentions so that Parliament can perform its role and exercise the principle of democratic control. In that respect, I will also be available to discuss the implementation of the budget with the Parliament's competent committee.

3. What specific commitments are you prepared to make in terms of enhanced transparency, increased cooperation and effective follow-up to Parliament's

positions and requests for legislative initiatives, also in the light of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon? In relation to planned initiatives or ongoing procedures, are you ready to provide Parliament with information and documents on an equal footing with the Council?

I am very much aware that the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon gives the European Parliament a key role in the decision-making process where the common agricultural policy is concerned. Therefore, I believe that the relationship between the European Parliament and the Commissioner for agriculture and rural development will be critical to strengthening the CAP's credibility, not to mention the essential nature of this relationship in terms of new guidelines that may be established for the CAP.

Transparency towards the European Parliament, permanent dialogue and regular reports will in future be key factors in ensuring the quality of European decision-making. Bearing in mind this profound conviction, I intend to structure the tasks of my cabinet in such a way that my contact with the members of the European Parliament becomes a priority.

Through its members, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development brings together a wide range of competencies and reflects the diversity and expectations of Europeans. I believe that this wealth and expertise must be utilised in the CAP decision-making process. I am convinced that the credibility of the CAP is directly linked to the ability of the European institutions involved in the decision-making process to meet the needs of citizens, taxpayers and consumers. Therefore, my permanent contact with the European Parliament – the elected body representing Europe's citizens – will be all the more important in my view. I am willing to accept Parliament's invitations to bilateral meetings as well as direct communication with the members of the AGRI Committee and other Parliamentary committees concerned. I confirm my willingness to provide clear information and give my utmost consideration to any suggestions made to me so that we can develop together the policies best suited to meeting the challenges facing Europe in the field of agriculture and rural development.

I undertake to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Framework Agreement between the Commission and Parliament in my sphere of competence, particularly the follow-up to the positions of the European Parliament.

In my view, the extension of the ordinary legislative procedure to the CAP introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon implies equal treatment in my relations with all institutions involved in the decision-making process.

Policy-related questions

4. What are the three main priorities you intend to pursue as part of your proposed portfolio, taking into account, where relevant, the financial, economic and social crisis and concerns related to sustainable development?

Firstly, I believe that, with a European Union of 27 Member States, Europe's agricultural sector and rural environment have become more diverse. This diversity should be incorporated into the Commission's future proposals. To have a strong and credible CAP, Europe's citizens must be able to identify with this common policy.

We must continue to reform the CAP in order to take account of the new reality of Europe's agricultural sector and rural environment. I therefore intend to propose a post-2013 reform to make better use of the measures already taken and to take the new reality into consideration.

The reform should incorporate three main priorities:

- Maintaining, and making better use of, sustainable agriculture throughout the EU. To that end, I believe we should continue to make direct payments to farmers, subject to certain basic conditions involving the use of farm land. The recurring themes of remunerating certain basic public goods in combination with cross-compliance measures, the conditions for distributing direct aid in the context of redistribution, both in terms of the different categories of farmers and in terms of the Member States, must be raised and debated. These themes will have to be discussed in detail, and we will need to listen to all the agricultural and social partners directly affected by these issues. Through this dialogue, we will find the appropriate answers to meet the challenges of a strong, balanced CAP which I hope we will see after 2013.
- Gearing agricultural production effectively towards the market, combined with mechanisms aimed at providing a sufficient degree of security for farmers in a crisis situation. We will have to take better account of the more volatile nature of the agricultural markets, as shown by the unprecedented price variations in 2008 and the ensuing economic crisis in 2009. These realities demonstrate, in my view, the need to have sufficiently effective safety nets to prevent whole sections of European agriculture from being irreversibly affected. More recently, the Union's dairy sector has suffered a slump in demand. These recent events underline the need to provide modern, effective and reactive mechanisms through the CAP in order to bring a sufficient level of security to the major economic sector of agriculture and, by extension, the agri-food industry.
- A strengthened rural development policy. This policy should support the promotion of our rural heritage in economic, social and environmental terms, as well as the modernisation of agriculture in Europe's regions in line with the competitive pressures of the market, the demands of consumers and taxpayers and the expectations of citizens regarding quality of life and the rural environment. European rural policy must therefore support investment, innovation, the diversification of economic opportunities and the mobilisation of resources and local stakeholders. In so doing, these rural development measures will need to incorporate clearly the new challenges posed by climate change.

Through its reformed CAP, the European Union must ensure the sustainable production of goods, contribute towards social cohesion, ensure that the economic crisis is managed efficiently and contribute towards the creation of a multipolar world capable of developing local agricultural and rural economies.

5. What are the specific legislative and non-legislative initiatives you intend to put forward, and according to what timetable? What specific commitments can you make regarding in particular the committees' priorities and requests attached hereto which would fall within your portfolio? How would you personally ensure the good quality of legislative proposals?

As regards new initiatives, over the next few months I intend to be at the disposal of the

parties affected by the future of the CAP after 2013. This is a lengthy process, which involves listening to and consulting governmental and non-governmental bodies. This debate and the talks on the post-2013 financial perspectives are closely linked.

Apart from working on the future of the CAP, the legislative programme I envisage will include new regulatory proposals aimed at promotion, labelling and quality marks for agricultural products. I will keep a close eye on topical matters including changes in food prices and the situation in the dairy sector, for which I await the conclusions and proposals of the High Level Group set up in November.

Climate change and the resources made available to farmers to adapt and reduce their carbon emissions will also be among my priorities. I intend to continue working hard in order to conclude a balanced agreement on the 'arrangements' for agriculture under the Doha Development Agenda (DDA), being careful to take account of the needs of European agriculture.

In this debate on the future of the CAP, particular attention should be paid to the diversity of European agriculture.

Two major initiatives which I also have in mind involve continuing to simplify the CAP, particularly for farmers, and reducing the administrative burden for managing direct payments and for rural development.

Improving regulations ('smart regulation'), simplifying the CAP and reducing the administrative burden will also help improve the quality of the legislative proposals which I intend to put forward.

My proposals will be accompanied by impact analyses, including environmental and social issues, as well as the criteria for measuring the administrative burden. Throughout this process, I will involve all stakeholders affected by these decisions.

As regards the priorities of the AGRI Committee annexed to this questionnaire and the specific requests to be presented by it, I wish to make the following points:

I believe that the changeover to the ordinary legislative ('codecision') procedure represents an opportunity for a major policy such as the CAP since it will allow us to better respond to the needs of farmers, people living in rural areas, and European citizens in general. The experience and political approach of the members of the European Parliament will provide a major contribution in that respect. I can assure you that I am completely open to improving my proposals as Commissioner, following and thanks to dialogue with the members of the Parliamentary committees.

I believe that the future CAP has to ensure the security of supply of the food and non-food raw material markets in Europe and worldwide, while providing environmental public goods, and by contributing towards a viable rural environment and balanced regional development.

I also believe that the CAP must be based on a system of decoupled direct payments aimed at maintaining a sustainable agricultural sector which responds to market signals and delivers a

basic level of public goods that meets demand. Moreover, the CAP must ensure the proper functioning of the markets and address the issue of the high volatility of prices, while providing sufficient stability for farmers' incomes. In my view, the CAP's rural development policy must be the key instrument for providing a link between modernising agriculture and the economic and social regeneration of rural areas and allowing agriculture to develop targeted public goods where the environment and climate change are concerned. Against this background, we will have to continue the debate on the alignment of rural development and regional development.

I believe that the funding for the CAP is sufficient. The debate on the budget allocated to the CAP should take account of the objectives which we set for this policy. That aside, any debate on the percentage of the budget allocated to the CAP out of the total EU budget is, in my view, irrelevant. As Commissioner for agriculture and rural development, I will ensure adequate funds are allocated to the CAP in order to ensure its proper implementation. I believe we must adhere to the principle of solidarity enshrined in the Treaty, preserve the CAP's ability to provide the European Union with food security, meet the needs of the markets while ensuring environmental protection and the preservation of the countryside, meet the challenges posed by climate change, and provide the Union's farmers with a decent standard of living.

The CAP must remain a strong common policy; it must be modern and take into account the needs of the Community as a whole.

I am a strong proponent of codecision for the CAP and am very happy that the European Parliament is now fully involved in this decision-making process. Article 43(3) TFEU constitutes a derogation from the codecision principle and must therefore be interpreted narrowly. A case-by-case analysis should be made to prevent the use of this article from rendering the principle of codecision meaningless.

I believe we must build our relationship on the basis of mutual trust and, for my part, I will work hard to achieve this.