



EU farm policy after 2013: Commission proposals welcomed with reservations

Committees: Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

Commissioner Dacian Cioloş debated his farm policy reform proposals, including new greening measures, better-targeted payments for farmers, and an overall drive to boost competitiveness, with Agriculture Committee MEPs on Wednesday, the day they were announced. MEPs insisted that new rules must not add red tape and that funding must match the challenges facing farmers striving to provide a secure supply of high-quality goods for EU citizens.

"We are facing a reform of great importance that will take us into a new era, in which the volatility will become a systematic phenomenon and farmers will need new tools to manage a new and difficult situation" said Agriculture Committee chair Paolo De Castro (S&D, IT), stressing that that this was the first farm policy reform to be co-decided by Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

The new rules should focus on better targeting payments to farmers, linking support for them with greening measures such as setting aside 7% of farming land, further support for research and innovation, aid for young farmers, a stronger safety net to respond to crises such as E-coli and more competition in the food distribution chain, Mr Cioloş told the committee.

MEPs welcomed the proposals with reservations, calling for more cuts in red tape, fairer distribution of EU funding, questioning greening measures and applauding plans to increase innovation spending.

Reform to meet expectations of farmers and consumers

"The EP will make full use of its co-decision prerogative", said Albert Dess (EPP, DE), welcoming the proposals as a good starting point for a discussion. "We will under no circumstances accept more red tape", he warned with regard to the proposed greening measures, adding that food security for 500 million EU citizens is something the EPP "wants to see guaranteed".

The negotiations ahead of us will be "a milestone in the EU history" and our decisions need to be based on "solidarity and justice", said Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos (S&D, PT), calling for "final results to meet expectations of farmers, consumers and taxpayers", including easy access to payments for farmers.

Less red tape, more competitiveness

Some of the proposals are good, and some bad, said George Lyon (ALDE, UK) welcoming the plan to ensure that "better targeted payments" go only to active farmers, provisions to help young farmers and the "claim to simplify" CAP. The legislative package nonetheless falls "dreadfully short" on measures to make EU agriculture more competitive, he said.

This reform proposal "is complicated, bureaucratic, will lead to more red tape and will be too hard for farmers to implement", said James Nicholson (ECR, UK), stressing that Parliament would need to amend the proposal to get it back on track. Referring to proposal to cap direct payments for bigger farms, he said he would oppose the measure as it would be "a disaster for some Member States".

Press release

Fairer distribution of EU funds

"You have taken steps into right direction but not enough by far", said Martin Häusling (Greens/EFA, DE), questioning whether increasing production is "the right course to follow". Referring to plans to redistribute EU funds among Member States, he said many of them, mainly new ones "will be dissatisfied". "Consumers must also be involved in the debate" on the reform of the farm policy, he added

The issue of fair distribution of EU funds among Member States was also raised by Alfred Rubiks (GUE/NGL, LV), who insisted that Latvian and other Baltic farmers should receive at least 90% of EU average payments by 2020.

"Is there going to be some kind of aid for states with regional divisions?" asked Lorenzo Fontana (EFD, IT), who was also interested in what kind of promotional measures would be taken to support high-quality products when put on the market.

Next steps

Parliament's rapporteurs have already been appointed and the Agriculture Committee is preparing, in cooperation with the Polish Presidency and the Commission an extensive public debate on the future agriculture policy.

The first event is scheduled to take place on 7 November when the Agriculture Committee will welcome farm ministers from Member States to discuss merits of proposals unveiled today.

The reformed farm policy, which is closely linked to the new multiannual financial framework, is to enter into force on 1 January 2014.

Parliament's rapporteurs

Core reports

Regulation for direct support schemes for farmers: Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos (S&D, PT)

Regulation on common organisation of markets: Michel Dantin (EPP, FR)

Regulation on support for rural development: Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos (S&D, PT)

Regulation on financing management and monitoring: Giovanni La Via (EPP, IT)

Reports linked to the reform package:

Regulation on transitional measures for the year 2013: Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos (S&D, PT)

Regulation on common organisation of markets (vine-growers): Herbert Dorfmann (EPP, IT)

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