

PODCAST agricultural policies

Voice 1: Brian

Voice 2: Sarah

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VOICE 2

You're listening to the European Parliamentary Research Service podcast on priorities and challenges of the EU Agricultural Policy.

VOICE 1

The common agricultural policy is one of the EU's oldest policies. It is deeply rooted in the European integration project and has been reformed on many occasions, to be better able to respond to the challenges of the time.

VOICE 2

Today's CAP is a multi-functional policy, supporting market oriented, sustainable agricultural production, whilst keeping rural areas alive. But what kind of agricultural policy do we want for the future? Join the debate!

END OF INTRO JINGLE

VOICE 1

With close to 40% of the EU budget assigned to it, the common agricultural policy supports European farmers in meeting the needs of 500 million Europeans. Its main objectives are to ensure a decent standard of living for farmers and a stable food supply for consumers.

VOICE 2

Because of its longevity, the CAP has changed a lot since it was established in 1962! and it continues to change today...

VOICE 1

One of the major reforms took place in 2013, when three new objectives were set: to ensure viable food production, the sustainable management of natural resources and the development of vibrant rural areas throughout the EU.

VOICE 2

Although its initial objectives are still being pursued, the weight given to the different objectives and the instruments to achieve them have changed considerably! With SUSTAINABILITY becoming the key word...

VOICE 1

Over the years, the common agricultural policy has moved away from supporting product prices, to supporting producers' income and rural development.

VOICE 2

Whether or not the current objectives and instruments need to be changed in the future is the subject of intense debate... But before entering into this discussion, let's look at the situation today!

MUSIC JINGLE

VOICE 1

The EU is broadly self-sufficient in most agricultural primary commodities, which means that EU farmers are able to meet the consumption demands of EU citizens in most agricultural foods...

VOICE 2

... albeit with some exceptions, such as soya beans, maize and rice. But we are big producers of wheat, milk powder and pig meat!

VOICE 1

We are also the second largest exporter of agri-food products in the world! And according to the Commission, over the next 10-15 years, 90% of additional global demand for agri-food products will come from outside Europe! So, there is a growing market for European farmers out there...

VOICE 2

Today, the EU counts around 10.8 million farms, most of them small family-run farms which are passed down from one generation to the next. But increasingly

volatile agricultural markets and falling agricultural prices tend to discourage many young people from taking over their parents' farms... so the number of farmers is decreasing steadily...

VOICE 1

In 2013, the sector employed 22 million workers, 3 million fewer than in 2010... and close to a third of them are more than 65 years old. So, something needs to change in order to keep the EU's farming sector alive! The question is WHAT??

VOICE 2

The reform of the CAP for the post 2020 period is today the subject of intense discussions... In February 2017, the Commission launched a three-month public consultation to test the ground for further simplification and modernisation of the common agricultural policy.

VOICE 1

Questions included how to improve the competitiveness of EU farmers while securing a decent income for them? how to better support rural development, and cut red tape?

VOICE 2

Commissioner Phil Hogan has indicated his desire to maintain basic income support and ensure an effective safety net through direct payments. Other priorities are moving towards more sustainable farming practices and attracting young people to the farming business! But what's the position of Member States??

JINGLE

VOICE 1

Reform of the CAP is also a hot topic in the Council! During a debate in March 2017, ministers agreed on the need for further simplification. Some member states also stressed the need to focus on building resilience, responding to environmental challenges, investing in rural vitality, maintaining a market orientation and strengthening farmers' position in the food chain.

VOICE 2

Some member states were in favour of placing more emphasis on rural development, whilst others warned against a reduction of direct support to farmers. And what about the European Parliament?

VOICE 1

As co-legislator in this matter, the Parliament's opinion will be crucial for the future direction of agricultural policy. And MEPs in the Agriculture Committee are certainly not wasting their time!

VOICE 2

During the first quarter of 2017, they have examined a large number of proposals: from the so-called omnibus regulation, organic farming and simplification, down to access to land by farmers and different ways to reduce food waste...

VOICE 1

The EU's advisory bodies, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee, are also engaged in active debates on the reform of the CAP post 2020, and especially on how to ensure a vibrant future for rural areas...

VOICE 2

European agriculture organisations and civil society also want to have their say! COPA-GOGECA -one of the biggest organisations representing European farmers- has called for a strong, common and adequately financed CAP. And one which is able to deal not only with climate risks but also market risks...

VOICE 1

In March 2017, over 150 European civil society organisations and NGOs came together to demand better food and farming policies for Europe. So, we can expect a very lively debate in the years to come!

VOICE 2

Certainly...! And proof of this can be seen through more than 320.000 online responses to the European Commission's online consultation, which closed in early May! Now, the Commission will need to examine all these contributions and we expect to hear more before the end of the year....

VOICE 1

In the meantime, the ball will be in the court of the Estonian Presidency, which takes over from Malta in July. We wish them all the luck in steering the debate!

VOICE 2

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