



2016/2221(INI)

28.2.2017

OPINION

of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on working conditions and precarious employment
(2016/2221(INI))

Rapporteur: Viorica Dăncilă

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas agriculture and the agri-food industry account for 6 % of EU GDP, 15 million businesses and 46 million jobs;
- B. whereas the geography, topography and accessibility of the land, in particular in island, mountain and remote areas and the outermost regions (ORs), necessarily make employment and working conditions in the farming industry more challenging and insecure;
- C. whereas these inherent problems are compounded by short-term factors, such as economic uncertainties and unpredictable weather, which, as can be seen today, make the situation of workers in the agricultural sector all the more difficult, leading to a decline in the number of farmers and small family farms, and whereas population ageing and depopulation are trends which are particularly pronounced in rural areas of the EU;
- D. whereas the crisis of recent years has contributed to a deepening of the crisis in the agricultural sector and affected farmers' capacity to invest and create employment, to the detriment of modernisation, innovation, the involvement of young people in farming and generational renewal; whereas common agricultural policy (CAP) investment is not yet in line with the EU's Europe 2020 sustainability targets given that it is not yet investing at least one euro in five in sustainable farming; whereas agriculture must be allowed to adapt to meet challenging circumstances by fostering innovation;
- E. whereas age structure in the agricultural sector is a cause for concern given that since 2010 only 7.5 % of farmers have been under 35 years old and more than 4.5 million of those now running farms are aged over 65; whereas in the period 2000-2012, 4.8 million full-time jobs were lost in the EU agricultural industry, 70 % of which were in the new Member States and 93 % of which concerned self-employment, and whereas, in that connection, it is difficult to accurately assess the number of people employed in agriculture since 'illegal' employment is, by its very nature, not included in the available data¹;
- F. whereas, in many Member States, women in rural regions have limited access to employment in farming or other sectors of the labour market and experience a wider pay gap than in other areas, yet they play an extremely important role in the development and social fabric of rural areas, particularly on farms;
- G. whereas agricultural work is often weather-dependent and seasonal;
- H. whereas EU farmers' average annual incomes have stagnated or even declined over the past 10 years, while production costs have continuously increased and large investments and the financial risks necessary to keep their farms going put them in an increasingly

¹ European Commission – Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development. 2014 Management Plan (July).

precarious situation, resulting in a substantial drop in the number of farms and the threat of many job losses in rural areas;

- I. whereas many agricultural activities are carried out by assisting family members, often without social protection;
 - J. whereas social and economic circumstances and living conditions have changed substantially over recent years and whereas there are large disparities in this respect between and within Member States;
 - K. whereas the EU's agri-food export sector is growing steadily and playing a key role in driving economic recovery and, as a result of the number of new businesses being set up, also in job creation;
1. Stresses that farmers and farm workers are, by virtue of their profession, more exposed to a range of external factors that make job prospects precarious and insecure, such as price and market fluctuations and imbalances in the agri-food chain, and that unpredictable weather also has severe effects and impacts, particularly on the ORs and mountain regions; considers that remunerative farm gate prices covering production costs are fundamental to secure farmers' incomes in the long run; considers, nonetheless, that income-stabilisation and risk-management tools and agricultural mutual funds could help make farmworkers less vulnerable, as well as strengthen the farmers' position in the food supply chain;
 2. Calls on Member States to exchange best practice and to consider new innovative ways of developing an adaptable and flexible labour market to meet the challenges of a rural economy;
 3. Stresses that a stable income is essential if farmers are to gain access to loans;
 4. Draws attention to the specific case of seasonal workers, whose working conditions are particularly precarious; understands 'seasonal workers' to be workers who have entered into open-ended or fixed-term employment contracts, the duration and renewal of which are contingent to a major degree on seasonal factors, such as the changing weather, public holidays and/or the timing of harvests;
 5. Recalls that Directive 2014/36/EU on the conditions of entry and stay of third-country nationals for the purpose of employment as seasonal workers establishes a minimum standard of rights; calls on the Member States to make sure that it is correctly implemented, and asks the Commission to submit a progress report on its implementation by September 2019;
 6. Calls on the Commission to promote and raise awareness of the protection rights of seasonal workers and on the Member States to regulate the social and legal status of seasonal workers, to safeguard their hygiene, health and safety conditions at work and to provide them with social security cover, while complying with Article 23 of Directive 2014/36/EU ensuring equal treatment with nationals of the host Member State, including 'equal pay and equal social protection'; emphasises the need to provide all seasonal workers with comprehensive information on employment and social security rights, including pensions, taking into account also the cross-border aspect of seasonal work;

7. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to define minimum working conditions in agriculture in order to ensure safety at work, basic and further training facilities and workers' rights;
8. Calls on the Commission, together with the Member States, to explore schemes to give seasonal workers long-term employment, such as the implementation of pluriactivity contracts across the EU or even a European Agreement;
9. Calls on the Commission to disqualify from CAP and European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) support any employer who has been convicted of breaching worker safety regulations or using undeclared workers;
10. Notes reports of cases of abuse of migrant workers' rights by organised crime groups operating in the EU who exploit insufficient job market transparency; urges the Member States to increase their oversight of migrant workers' employment conditions; calls on the Commission, together with the Member States, to address the cases of immigrant exploitation in the agricultural sector in those regions where farm workers work for almost no money and live in deplorable conditions; stresses the need to take effective action, including targeted inspections and checks, to ensure that farm workers have decent working and living conditions and emphasises the need to ensure that employment rights and labour laws are upheld;
11. Calls on the Commission to gauge the scale of illegal employment networks in the EU by conducting investigations and compiling statistics, in particular in the parts of the EU in which undeclared work and farm labour exploitation are most common;
12. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to step up support for technical training for seasonal farm workers to address the relatively high risk of accidents as well as structural and seasonal unemployment, while involving producers' organisations in this process, in relation to both the drawing-up of training plans and dissemination and incentives for workers, as well as for actions to raise workers' awareness of their rights, thereby averting the possible exploitation of workers;
13. Points out that over 4.5 million farmers are over 65 and that farmers aged under 35 account for only 6 % of those in charge of farms; notes that young people and women have particular problems finding jobs in rural areas in or outside agriculture or starting a farm of their own; calls on the Commission and the Member States to efficiently encourage the uptake of the measures provided for under the CAP to help young farmers set up, and to ensure that funding for young farmers and support programmes for women in rural areas ensure decent jobs with fair wages in agriculture and in upstream and downstream sectors;
14. Recalls the importance of a strong CAP which is able to help young farmers play a secure role on the market, encourage the uptake of farming and guarantee that farmers remain in farming in the long term; points out that investment in rural infrastructure will help increase the attractiveness of the countryside, develop the local economy in a sustainable manner, and draw workers towards agriculture and avoid depopulation; calls on the Member States to use the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) purposefully to create sustainable jobs in farming in order to stimulate employment in rural areas;

15. Stresses the importance of investment in ICT in rural areas, which is crucial in keeping rural communities connected to the global world, crucial for those who are seeking work, crucial for those looking to start their own business and crucial for those who live in the most isolated parts of our rural communities;
16. Urges action to tackle the gender gap in rural areas and improve the situation of women's employment, such as women's working conditions and access to land; points out that the gender pay gap is more than 10 % higher in rural areas than elsewhere; stresses the need for up-to-date statistics on farm ownership and female employment in rural areas to inform and facilitate gender mainstreaming in EU agricultural and rural policies in line with the principle of equality and non-discrimination; calls, furthermore, on the Commission and the Member States to facilitate women's equality in the labour market and work-life balance in rural areas, particularly regarding income, social and pension rights, promotion of new qualifications and opportunities for women, and by tackling barriers to their involvement in agricultural employment, such as unequal access to credit, technical equipment and other important resources such as land; highlights the importance of never confusing family work with precarious work, recalling that family farms make up around 85 % of all farms in Europe and account for 68 % of the total utilised agricultural area, which means that it is important to establish a legal framework for this type of work at European level, with its own status, rights and obligations; points out that, in the ORs, the search for employment solutions, especially in times of economic contraction, is compromised by the lack of interconnectivity, and, given the importance of agriculture in these regions, takes the view that the funds under the CAP ought to continue to apply positive discrimination to these territories facing specific constraints, as recognised in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, given the multiplier effect of these funds in terms of promoting other related activities, such as agro-industry, tourism, nature conservation, energy production and the circular economy, in a way that complements the multi-fund strategy for more cohesion and balanced territorial development;
17. Emphasises the need for a proportion of EU cohesion funding to be granted to disadvantaged regions, such as mountain areas and the ORs, so as to ensure the fair creation, maintenance and development of decent working conditions and payment in all EU regions;
18. Calls on industry to take up all opportunities arising from innovation to develop precision farming which is accessible to all, thus empowering people with disabilities, promoting gender equality and broadening the skills base and employment opportunities in rural communities;
19. Calls on all the Member States to offer young farmers long-term prospects in order to address the problem of rural depopulation, to implement a comprehensive generational renewal strategy and, to this end, to make full use of all the opportunities available under the new CAP to support young farmers and new entrants to farming, with particular regard to the first- and second-pillar aid measures for young farmers, and also to help new entrants over the age of 40 to set up in farming;
20. Calls on the Commission to put into practice the recommendations set out in the Andrieu report ('How can the CAP improve job creation in rural areas?'), which was adopted by Parliament on 27 October 2016, and in particular to promote and maximise the full

capacity of funds from the EAFRD in an effort to develop a genuine social economy and a buoyant market economy in rural areas;

21. Calls on the Commission to harness potential new synergies between the EFSI and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs), in particular the EAFRD and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), in order to leverage investment designed to improve working conditions and combat precarious employment;
22. Calls on the Member States to continue to strengthen the role of the social partners and social protection agencies when necessary, and to provide effective instruments, including adequate inspections and controls, in rural areas to combat undeclared work and improve safety and well-being at work, with a view to promoting the integration of all types of farm worker, particularly young people, women and migrant workers, even – and above all – those engaged in seasonal work;
23. Calls on the Commission to encourage, and the Member States to implement, simplified administrative requirements, and to cut red tape relating to social security, taxation and employment, making the hiring process less complex and less redundant; calls on the Member States at the same time to implement such simplifications correctly in order to reduce the complexity and volume of regulation;
24. Notes the regular, repeated and cumulative professional exposure of farmers and agri-food workers to cocktails of hazardous substances which are suspected to cause specific illnesses possibly leading to reproductive disorders and carcinogenic effects; notes, furthermore, the importance of raising awareness of the risks associated with those substances, providing training for manipulation, use and storage thereof and reducing the risk of exposure, while guaranteeing that measures intended to limit exposure are sufficiently implemented and controlled;
25. Recalls also the importance of a strong CAP which is able to help young farmers play a bigger role in the market and also to create living conditions conducive to their remaining in farming in the long term.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	28.2.2017
Result of final vote	+: 35 -: 3 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	John Stuart Agnew, Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Eric Andrieu, José Bové, Daniel Buda, Nicola Caputo, Matt Carthy, Viorica Dăncilă, Michel Dantin, Paolo De Castro, Jean-Paul Denanot, Albert Deß, Herbert Dorfmann, Luke Ming Flanagan, Beata Gosiewska, Martin Häusling, Anja Hazekamp, Esther Herranz García, Jan Huitema, Peter Jahr, Ivan Jakovčić, Jarosław Kalinowski, Elisabeth Köstinger, Zbigniew Kuźmiuk, Mairead McGuinness, Ulrike Müller, James Nicholson, Marijana Petir, Laurențiu Rebega, Bronis Ropė, Maria Lidia Senra Rodríguez, Czesław Adam Siekierski, Tibor Szanyi, Marc Tarabella, Marco Zullo
Substitutes present for the final vote	Franc Bogovič, Michela Giuffrida, Anthea McIntyre, Susanne Melior, Sofia Ribeiro, Miguel Viegas
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Pilar Ayuso

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

35	+
ALDE	Jan Huitema, Ivan Jakovčić, Ulrike Müller
ECR	Jørn Dohrmann, Anthea McIntyre, James Nicholson
ENF	Laurențiu Rebega
GUE/NGL	Matt Carthy, Luke Ming Flanagan, Anja Hazekamp
PPE	Franc Bogovič, Daniel Buda, Michel Dantin, Albert Deß, Herbert Dorfmann, Esther Herranz García, Peter Jahr, Jarosław Kalinowski, Elisabeth Köstinger, Mairead McGuinness, Marijana Petir, Czesław Adam Siekierski
S&D	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Eric Andrieu, Nicola Caputo, Paolo De Castro, Jean-Paul Denanot, Viorica Dăncilă, Michela Giuffrida, Susanne Melior, Tibor Szanyi, Marc Tarabella
VERTS/ALE	José Bové, Martin Häusling, Bronis Ropė

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ECR	Beata Gosiewska, Zbigniew Kuźmiuk
EFDD	John Stuart Agnew

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention