

Janusz Wojciechowski

Agriculture

Hearing due to be held on Tuesday 1 October at 14.30 hours.

European Parliament committee responsible: Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI).

Born in 1954, Janusz Wojciechowski was appointed to the European Court Auditors in 2016, where he is a member of Chamber I (Sustainable use of natural resources). After starting as an observer in 2003, prior to Poland's accession to the EU, he then served as an MEP, from 2004 to 2016. He was a member of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group in the last parliamentary term.



Wojciechowski holds a Master's degree in law and has held a number of judicial appointments in Poland as a judge. He has adjudicated at the Supreme Court and was nominated as a member of the National Council of the Judiciary of Poland in 1990. He was President of the Polish Supreme Audit Office from 1995 to 2001 and served as a member of the Polish Parliament and was its Deputy Speaker from 2001 to 2004. He is the author of a number of publications on criminal law.

During his career in the European Parliament, he was Vice-Chair of the Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) Committee (2004-2016) and chair of the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals. He has spoken in plenary debates on the situation in Poland, the crisis in the agriculture sector, the cultivation of GMOs and the fight against organised crime and corruption. He was rapporteur for reports on the protection of animals during transport and on the Animal Health Strategy for the EU (2007-2013). As shadow rapporteur, he covered dossiers concerning renewable energy, novel foods, the EU Strategy for the

Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015, direct payments and organic production.

This is one of a set of Briefings designed to give Members of the European Parliament an overview of major issues of interest in the context of the hearings of the Commissioners-designate. The full set of Briefings can be found at: https://epthinktank.eu/commissioner_hearings_2019

Background

The agriculture and rural development portfolio covers the EU policies and funding arrangements for farming support, rural development and the framework for agricultural market measures provided under the common agricultural policy (CAP). Viewed by many as a 'genuinely European policy', since Member States pool resources to operate a single European policy within a single European budget, the CAP has evolved through [five reform packages](#) between 1992 and 2013. Overall, the CAP consists of two pillars. The [first pillar](#) provides direct payments to farmers to help stabilise their incomes and is linked to complying with safety norms, environmental and animal welfare standards. It also provides for market measures to tackle specific market situations. [Pillar II](#) covers rural development policy, implemented through 118 multiannual rural development programmes. The CAP includes measures to secure climate and environmental benefits as well as a requirement for a minimum proportion of funding to be spent on such measures. A number of related policy areas remain outside the agriculture and rural development portfolio, such as: animal health and welfare, plant health, food safety, biotechnology and international trade policies.

There is considerable diversity in agriculture across the EU in terms of farm size and types of farming. The vast majority of its 10.8 million farms are relatively small, family-run farms, often passed down from one generation to the next. A long-term decline in the number of farms is coupled with a significant consolidation of EU agricultural production in relatively few larger farms. In demographic terms, 31 % of farmers in the EU are older than 65 years.

Recent developments

During the 2014-2019 period, key developments in the agricultural and rural development portfolio included the implementation of the 2013 CAP reform and the response to crises in the agricultural markets. The latter represented a key concern for policy-makers. The European Parliament highlighted the persistence of a 'crisis' in the agricultural sector, largely in the dairy, pig-meat and fruit and vegetable sectors. A series of measures were implemented to address the difficulties facing European fruit and vegetable, and dairy producers resulting from the 2014 Russian import ban. The 'Omnibus Regulation' (Agricultural provisions) was adopted during the 2014-2019 period, amending all the main CAP regulations and providing for a range of policy-related simplification measures including provisions allowing for an increase in payments to young farmers. The European Commission's [communication](#) on 'the future of food and farming' issued at the end of November 2017 included provision for a new delivery model whereby the EU would set the basic policy parameters involving nine specific CAP objectives as well as the different types of CAP instruments. The Member States would have responsibility and a certain degree of flexibility for translating this framework into support arrangements for beneficiaries. A key element in this approach will involve each Member State drawing up a CAP strategic plan covering interventions under both pillars. Each plan would be subject to approval by the Commission, while system performance monitoring would gain importance over the compliance of each single operation.

Priorities and challenges

Public opinion

Evidence on how European citizens perceive agriculture, rural areas and the CAP can be drawn from the findings of Eurobarometer surveys. A 2018 Special Eurobarometer survey found:

- a high level of awareness of the CAP (67 % of respondents);
- that more than nine out of ten (92 %) thought agriculture and rural areas were important for the future;
- that almost nine in ten respondents were in favour of the EU making subsidy payments to farmers for farming practices beneficial to the climate and the environment.

Source: [Special Eurobarometer 473](#), European Commission, February 2018.

Drawing on these findings, the Commission points to the evidence they provide of strong public support for maintaining agricultural policy at the European level.

The new Parliament will face a wide range of key economic, social, climate and environmental challenges impacting on the agricultural sector and rural areas. Identified by the Commission in a series of [background documents](#) published in December 2017, many of them are of a long-term duration often involving global forces. They include: adapting to the impacts of climate change as well as contributing to climate change mitigation; low EU agricultural productivity growth; price and income volatility, an ageing EU farm population, the difficulties young farmers face in accessing both capital and land; and low levels of agricultural training. Although not exhaustive, other issues could include the effects of agricultural intensification on biodiversity; the issue of food waste, and the role of agricultural research and innovation in addressing greenhouse gas emissions.

The priorities for this portfolio will involve securing agreement on the next EU budget, including the allocation for the next CAP. An [analysis](#) of the Commission's budgetary proposals undertaken by Parliament's Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies indicates that they would represent a reduction of 12 % in constant prices for the CAP, with a substantial reduction of around 25 % in real terms for Pillar II. Much will therefore depend on the outcome of the budget negotiations.

The [mission letter](#) from the Commission's President-elect, Ursula von der Leyen, tasks the Commissioner-designate for Agriculture to swiftly conclude negotiations on the CAP for the post-2020 period; to work closely with Member States on their CAP strategic plans, paying particular attention to the benchmarks and requirements on environment and climate-related objectives. In the case of the latter objectives, they will involve reducing the use of pesticides, fertilisers and chemicals in Europe and beyond. Other tasks include strengthening the system of geographical indications, developing a new long-term vision for rural areas and the promotion of Europe's high-quality food standards worldwide.

Priority topics in agriculture in the early months of the new Commissioner's term will include not only CAP reform and the new multiannual financial framework, but will likely also encompass transitional arrangements for the CAP, the recent Mercosur agreement, opportunities for the forestry sector, the situation of agricultural markets, anti-microbial resistance and sustainable animal health management. This will involve active consideration of the connections between agriculture, environment and climate change.

European Parliament

Treaty basis and EP competence

Article 4(2) of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) (TFEU) provides that the Union shares competence with the Member States in the area of agriculture. The main legal bases of EU agricultural policy are set out in Title III of the Treaty, in Articles 38 to 44, where the main objectives of the CAP are detailed. These are: (i) to increase agricultural productivity, (ii) to ensure a fair standard of living for farmers; (iii) to stabilise markets; (iv) to assure the availability of food supplies; (v) to ensure that supplies reach consumers at reasonable prices. Since the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament is co-legislator for most agricultural policy issues.

In relation to this portfolio, the eighth term of the European Parliament was characterised by intensive parliamentary work on a number of significant legislative files. These included:

- a directive on unfair trading practices in the food supply chain;
- a new regulation on organic production and labelling of organic products;
- a new regulation on plant health, as well as one on animal health;
- the 'Omnibus Regulation' – Agricultural provisions.

In December 2018, the European Parliament gave its [consent](#) to the [Economic Partnership Agreement](#) between the EU and Japan. This cleared the way for its conclusion and entry into force

of the biggest trade agreement ever negotiated by the EU, opening up the Japanese market of 127 million consumers to key EU agricultural exports.

The Parliament's AGRI committee has responsibility for examining and where necessary amending the European Commission's legislative proposals in respect of agricultural policy. It prepares reports for subsequent adoption by the Parliament in plenary. It has responsibility for examining the operation of the relevant financial instruments including legislation on veterinary and plant health matters, animal feeding stuffs, animal husbandry and welfare, quality of agricultural products, forestry and agroforestry. (See Annex V of the European Parliament's [Rules of Procedure](#)). Parliament has also pursued its scrutiny role of the European Commission through regular exchanges on, for example, the market difficulties facing European producers, or pest outbreaks.

Addressing the key issue of the future of the CAP, in May 2018, Parliament adopted an own-initiative [resolution](#) setting out its priorities for CAP reform. These included positions on: the continuation of direct payments to be fully financed from the EU budget; more finance to help invigorate rural areas, as well as stronger support for young and new farmers and for those hit by income and price volatility. The Commission's legislative proposals for the CAP for the 2021-2027 period provide for a CAP strategic plan regulation; a CAP horizontal regulation; and an amending regulation. In the case of the CAP strategic plan regulation, the AGRI committee is responsible for the file, while the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) is an associated committee. Following discussions in the 2014-2019 AGRI committee, the three files were the subject of three reports, involving a significant number of amendments adopted by the AGRI Committee in April 2019. As none of these reports was the subject of a plenary vote, it will be for the new Parliament to decide how to proceed with these files in the context of the future CAP. This will give new MEPs the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the Commission's legislative proposals.

FURTHER READING

Kelly, P. and McEldowney, J., [CAP strategic planning: Operational Perspectives](#), EPRS, European Parliament, September 2019.

McEldowney, J., [EU policies - Delivering for citizens: Agriculture](#), EPRS, European Parliament, February 2019.

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