



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

2011/2307(INI)

5.3.2012

OPINION

of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020
(2011/2307(INI))

Rapporteur: Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Notes that our natural heritage is a major ecological asset which is fundamental to human wellbeing; takes the view that all EU Member States should cooperate and coordinate their efforts to ensure a more effective use of natural resources and avoid net losses in the biodiversity and ecosystem services of both rural and urbanised areas;
2. Welcomes the new EU biodiversity strategy, but does not support the Commission proposal to create an additional, ‘greening’ payments component, as proposed in the draft reform of the CAP towards 2020; considers that the Commission proposals will increase administrative costs and run counter to the aim of simplifying the CAP;
3. Believes that before we undertake a further greening of the CAP we should examine the impact of such actions on the competitiveness of EU farming in the global market;
4. Notes the Commission recommendations for CAP reform, including clearly-formulated measures under both the first and second pillars seeking to conserve and improve biodiversity; stresses in this connection the particular role played by farming, which has already made a great contribution to preserving the diversity of species and biotopes and will also make a crucial contribution to the success of the European biodiversity strategy based on good agricultural practice including a sustainable use of water resources;
5. Stresses the need to move from a means-based approach to a results-based approach to assess the effectiveness of the instruments applied;
6. Is convinced that the so-called ‘greening’ of the CAP should be implemented efficiently and unbureaucratically, without leading to discrimination against existing agri-environmental measures; calls, inter alia, with a view to the necessary reduction in the administrative burden, for all CAP payments to continue to be underpinned by robust cross-compliance rules after 2014, which should be both transparent and as easy as possible to implement and monitor;
7. Believes that additional environmental effects at EU level can be achieved within the CAP framework, principally through more effective implementation of cross-compliance rules (including by all Member States applying the Standards of Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) and by alignment of the way in which the directives are implemented), the implementation of agri-environmental programmes and support for Natura 2000 areas under a better-funded second pillar of the CAP;
8. Recalls the key role played by the CAP in guaranteeing a secure supply of high-quality and affordable food for consumers; points out in this connection that the Commission proposal for the mandatory across-the-board designation of 7% of farmland as environmental focus areas is considered to be inappropriate and impracticable, particularly where these areas would no longer be available to produce food in productive regions;

9. Reiterates the importance of maintaining strong and economically competitive agriculture and forestry so as to preserve Europe's landscapes and biodiversity; highlights that the under-use and abandonment of agricultural land can have disastrous consequences for the natural environment, in this connection calls for the CAP budget after 2013 to, at the very least, be maintained at the current level in order to ensure the vitality of rural areas and the continuation of agricultural practices in Europe;
10. Calls on the Commission in the context of the new CAP reform to step up its efforts in support of agriculture sectors which make a proven contribution to preserving biodiversity, and in particular the bee-keeping sector; points out that wild and domesticated insects such as bees account for 80% of the pollination of flowering plants, and that the decline with which they are threatened represents an enormous challenge for our societies, whose agricultural production, and therefore food, depends in large part on the pollination of flowering plants; stresses, therefore, that particular attention should be paid to apiculture in the measures to be taken to protect biodiversity;
11. Stresses – given that over half of Europe's territory is managed by farmers - that the CAP is an absolutely crucial tool for biodiversity as European farmers contribute significantly to reaching European biodiversity and climate goals; supports the adoption of a package of workable practices at farm level aimed at a further reorientation of the CAP towards compensation for the delivery of public goods;
12. Considers that the market currently fails to take into account the economic value of ecosystem services and reward those who properly manage the land to provide them; considers it necessary, therefore, to pay for public goods provided by the agricultural sector so as to ensure the maintenance and improvement of biodiversity. in that context, considers that innovative solutions and cooperation projects should be given a prominent place; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote projects in which farmers are involved as partners;
13. Points out that many measures are already being implemented as part of the CAP that are helping to improve environmental protection and the preservation of natural resources and are responding to the challenges of climate change, the preservation of biodiversity and depletion of water resources and soil fertility; underlines that soil plays a vital role in achieving the EU's biodiversity objective; considers that the CAP should, via an EU-funded top-up direct area payment, reward farmers who provide additional ecosystem services also for actions fostering biodiversity, implemented in addition to the obligations arising from GAEC;
14. Takes the view that rural development measures must continue to respond to the challenges of climate change, the preservation of biodiversity, food security and the sustainable management of natural resources, and to foster balanced territorial cohesion and employment; calls, therefore, for a strengthening of Pillar II and for significant improvements to the environmental focus of that pillar and the effectiveness of its agri-environmental measures, including through minimum mandatory agricultural fund spending on agri-environmental measures;
15. Stresses that only functioning, sustainable, broad-based and productive agriculture is in a position to provide the additional services demanded by society in the form of public

assets; is therefore in favour of a balanced approach that integrates the introduction of additional environmental protection measures with the key role of the CAP in safeguarding efficient production;

16. Stresses the need for more effective cooperation at European level in the field of scientific and applied research regarding the diversity of animal and plant genetic resources in order to ensure their conservation and improve their ability to adapt to climate change and to promote their effective take-up in genetic improvement for production programmes;
17. Underlines the need to support environmentally friendly farming practices, including the use of traditional seeds and local plant varieties in order to preserve biodiversity; points out that the diversity of species and biotopes now seen as meriting protection can be attributed to the way in which land has been used for farming and forestry in Europe in the past, which should therefore be continued as part of a sustainable land-use strategy; points out in this connection that differing conditions such as climate, soil and the availability of water are found mainly at a local and regional level, and that regional conditions should therefore be taken into account and correspondingly differentiated possibilities for use should be found;
18. Recommends extending governance to the mobilisation of citizens, and also to non-profit organisations and economic actors, with the emphasis, in the case of the latter, being on integrating biodiversity into company strategies; stresses the need to organise biodiversity awareness and information campaigns for all ages and social categories, on the understanding that awareness campaigns for children and adolescents should, as a priority, be organised at school; takes the view that education and professional training, particularly in farming, forestry and related sectors, should be concentrated more on the role of biodiversity; believes that farmers have a major role in the conservation of biodiversity, and that they should therefore be encouraged and motivated to participate actively in the relevant programmes;
19. Draws the Commission's attention to the consequences for agricultural activity of certain biodiversity support policies, and in particular the impact of large predators (notably the bear and the wolf) on the agricultural economy, working conditions and the psychology of farmers.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	28.2.2012
Result of final vote	+: 32 -: 5 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	John Stuart Agnew, Liam Aylward, Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă, Michel Dantin, Paolo De Castro, Albert Deß, Diane Dodds, Herbert Dorfmann, Robert Dušek, Hynek Fajmon, Iratxe García Pérez, Béla Glattfelder, Sergio Gutiérrez Prieto, Martin Häusling, Esther Herranz García, Peter Jahr, Elisabeth Jeggle, Jarosław Kalinowski, Elisabeth Köstinger, Agnès Le Brun, Mairead McGuinness, Mariya Nedelcheva, James Nicholson, Rareş-Lucian Niculescu, Wojciech Michał Olejniczak, Marit Paulsen, Britta Reimers, Alfreds Rubiks, Giancarlo Scottà, Czesław Adam Siekierski, Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris, Alyn Smith, Marc Tarabella
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Luís Paulo Alves, Margrete Auken, María Auxiliadora Correa Zamora, Marian Harkin, Sandra Kalniete, Christa Klač, Anthea McIntyre, Milan Zver, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Rosa Estaràs Ferragut