

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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EU Parliament Reports on Agriculture and Climate Change

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Report Highlights:

The Parliament's Rapporteur on the relationship between Agriculture and Climate Change, Stéphane Le Foll, says agriculture can provide solutions for the future, given its direct relationship with the earth and living things. In his draft report, the French Member of the European Parliament (MEP) says a new Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) needs to take into account the impact of global warming and climate change. This new CAP would guarantee the transition to a new model of production and ecologically, economically and socially efficient agriculture.

General Information:

The EU Parliament's report begins with the assertion that climate change is an irrefutable fact and agriculture is directly affected since it manages the land resources necessary for human survival. According to the European Environment Agency (EEA), agriculture in the EU accounted for 9.3 percent of total Green House Gas (GHG) emissions in the EU27 in 2007, compared with 11 percent in 1990. This decrease is the result of smaller herds, more sustainable fertilizer use and better manure management.

French EU Member of the European Parliament (MEP), Stéphane Le Foll, has drafted a report on EU Agriculture and Climate Change. In his report the MEP says that farming is partly responsible for greenhouse gas emissions and this sector would be one of the most effected by climate change. However, agriculture can also play an important role in climate change mitigation by shifting the CAP towards more sustainable development. The MEP states that it is essential to foster the development of a different kind of agriculture better able to reconcile economic, social and environmental imperatives with the natural potential of each ecosystem.

Even though the MEP sees organic farming and integrated pest management practices as among the ecologically effective systems that need further development, he emphasizes the need to find ways to facilitate a transition to more sustainable agriculture in the case of other systems used on most farmland. This could be done if the future CAP encouraged practices that limit GHG emissions and fix carbon such as:

- Simplified cultivation techniques that provide plant cover
- Development of agro forestry, grassland and reforestation
- Protection of carbon-rich land
- Farm modernization

The draft suggests that the EU's position as the leading importer of agricultural produce results in a higher carbon cost than that generated by European farms, owing to the lower environmental standards often found in non-EU countries coupled with long-distance transport emissions. Therefore there is a need to inform consumers by means of appropriate carbon footprint labeling to compensate European farmers fairly for their efforts to reduce emissions and to encourage local farms to diversify, implying developing EU production of plant proteins.

As measures to help EU agriculture adapt to the effects of global warming, the report suggests that the CAP must offer financial incentives for farmers to implement the necessary agronomic adaptation measures in different regions, such as: optimizing water resource management, choosing crop varieties and crop rotation systems that consider drought and disease, soil protection etc..

The draft suggests that the future CAP will have to meet a growing public demand for a more sustainable agricultural policy at the same time as global warming may jeopardize world food production capacity, including in Europe. Also, "new challenges" such as climate change, water management, renewable energies and biodiversity should not just be "second pillar subsidies" but should be addressed through all CAP instruments. (See GAIN 49014)

The current cross-compliance system is based on “best efforts obligation” rather than on obligation to achieve results and needs a new approach focusing on sustainable production models. This new approach would necessitate compensatory aid to cover the extra costs arising from these objectives and pay for the services to society through the supply of “public goods” (such as the preservation of rural areas, biodiversity conservation, carbon capture and food security) that are not rewarded by the market.

The report calls on the Commission to consider turning the CAP into an agriculture, food and environment policy with a reasonable, more sustainable farmer support system that enjoys greater legitimacy in the eyes of the public and which also helps enhance the role and status of the farming profession. The Commission should also consider a new support system that promotes carbon fixing in farm soil and in biomass.

During the discussions in a public hearing in the Parliament, the rapporteur received many positive comments on his report for being the first to describe the overall picture, including biodiversity, water, soil and animal welfare and food production. Another French MEP José Bové, Vice Chairman of the Ag Committee, said the CAP economic model had failed to help the sector and stressed the need to change to deliver a new CAP able to turn its back on 30 years of mistakes. For the United States, Donald Reicosky, a retired soil scientist from USDA-ARS, gave a presentation on soil carbon management.

The report by Le Foll is an own-initiative, which means it is not legally binding. Own-initiative reports may invite the Commission to come forward with a legislative proposal.

Once a draft report has been presented to the Committee, members are given the chance to propose amendments before a certain deadline. The amendments will then be discussed and voted upon in the Committee. Once a draft report has been amended and a final vote taken, it becomes a report and will then be presented in the Plenary session. This report will reportedly go to Plenary on April 19, if it passes the Plenary it will be viewed as the EP opinion on this subject in future legislation procedures.

The full draft report can be found [here](#):
Amendments can be found [here](#):