




EMPOWERING YOUNG FARMERS AND RURAL YOUTH

The **European Council of Young Farmers** (CEJA), the **International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth** (MIJARC Europe) and **Rural Youth Europe** (RYEurope) call on all stakeholders involved in the 2019 European elections to acknowledge the crucial role of the European Union in bringing peace, food security, prosperity and opportunities to its citizens.





The above-mentioned organisations therefore urge stakeholders to keep these achievements in mind and make sure rural youth and young farmers are fully included.

For this purpose, the EU must ensure rural areas are places where young people can benefit from equal and fair opportunities in their personal, socio-educational and professional development. This must translate into a strong budget in the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2021-2027, a well-funded Erasmus+ programme and alignment with the sustainable development goals (SDGs). In addition to this, other EU funds available for rural development, i.e. Cohesion Policy, Youth Framework, environmental programmes, social inclusion, support to SMEs, etc. should be maximised in their use.

Better synergy between the different levels of decision-making, and the maintenance of a level playing-field across Europe are crucial. Moreover, there is a need for strong engagement in research and innovation so that rural areas can answer the challenges of the 21st century, while not suffering from excessive administrative burdens. The general public should also be informed about the role of rural areas in preserving landscapes and fostering job creation, and the EU must play a more important role in effectively guaranteeing the distribution of funds at Member-State level.

To ensure the empowerment of young people in rural areas, the three organisations representing rural youth and young farmers across Europe call for all stakeholders involved in the 2019 European elections to act in favour of:

1. Accessible and life-long education and training in and for rural areas, through:

- Further developing Erasmus+ programmes, so that they are better tailored for both young people studying and young entrepreneurs, thereby allowing them to go abroad and exchange knowledge and best practices;
- Promoting peer-to-peer learning using new technologies, developing platforms allowing young people to interact with others sharing the same entrepreneurial activity or interests and developing new skills;
- Harmonising agricultural studies and internships, and putting into place a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework for those teachers involved in the agricultural education system;
- Guaranteeing specific training to young people, including entrepreneurial skills on risk management, training on farm safety, marketing and sustainability, as examples.

2. Targeted investments supporting activities that facilitate entrepreneurship in rural areas, including:

- Increasing the amount of and accessibility to start-up aid for young farmers through mandatory and well-funded instruments in the CAP to truly ensure generational renewal takes place across Europe;
- Easing access to land for young farmers, through dedicated land mobility measures, and the preservation of agricultural land for its current use;
- The development of specific financial instruments in cooperation with the European Investment Bank to support young entrepreneurs in starting, maintaining and diversifying their activity thus ensuring the availability of jobs in rural areas in the future;
- Offering favourable investment rates for young people setting up and developing their businesses in rural communities;
- EU-funded research in the framework of Horizon Europe targeting farmers' needs and aimed at achieving effective and real benefits for them;
- Any form of cooperation between the actors in the agri-food chain including farmers' and producers' organisations and cooperatives, thereby creating better transparency, value-sharing and fairness in the food chain;
- Maintaining compensatory support aimed at preserving agricultural economic activities in areas facing natural constraints;
- Improving efficiency in the distribution of EU funds and diminishing the paperwork burdens for young people in accessing support schemes;
- Preserving the essential interests of young farmers and rural areas in the face of globalisation by ensuring coherence between agricultural, trade, social and international development policies.

3. Actions targeting the preservation of the social fabric of rural areas, such as:

- Maintaining and/or developing social and care services, including schools, kindergartens and homes for the elderly;
- Guaranteeing social inclusion, with a specific focus on the role of women in agriculture and rural areas;
- Protecting vulnerable people and minorities, including through the accessibility of appropriate social services and ensuring safe communities for all;
- Providing support for rural communities to help with the integration of refugees;
- Ensuring the presence of cultural and leisure activities to bring people together and preserve the social ties in rural communities, thus fostering dialogue between farmers and other rural inhabitants;
- Developing e-government services so that the population in rural areas can use new technologies to complete administrative procedures.

4. Better availability of affordable health services in terms of infrastructure and assistance by:

- Ensuring access to medical services, both general practitioners and specialised doctors, and medical facilities, including hospitals;
- Raising awareness about mental health and wellbeing on farms and in rural areas and guaranteeing access to psychological assistance.

5. Reliable infrastructure and connectivity, ensuring fair and equal access to services and activities, and in particular:

- High-quality, high-speed broadband;
- A reliable supply of electricity and water, as well as easy access to the grid;
- Essential infrastructure related to everyday life, such as sustainable public transport, roads and waste management services.

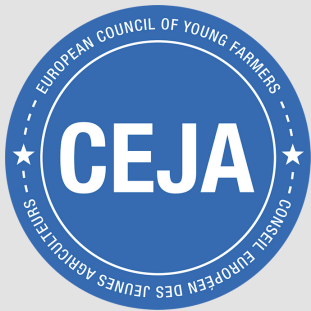
6. Actions to tackle environmental and climate change challenges in rural areas, more specifically:

- The elaboration of a regulatory framework in the CAP strongly based on incentives, implementable practices and measurable results, allowing farmers to undertake collective action to preserve the environment;
- Encouraging the development of infrastructure to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change (such as drought, new pests, diseases and resistance, etc.) so that rural communities can adapt their activities accordingly;
- Recognising and encouraging carbon storage through farming and forestry;
- Promoting a greater focus on innovation including the exploration of the possibilities offered by new technological and bio-technological developments;
- Further funding for research aimed at developing renewable energy and technologies in the circular and bio-economy;
- Reinforced collaboration between farmers, governments, universities and research institutes, particularly in the context of Horizon Europe projects;
- Better harmonisation of policies related to the environment and climate change, such as energy policy.

7. Support for rural youth and young farmers' organisations in their engagement for the future of rural communities by:

- Recognising the role of rural youth and young farmers' organisations and supporting them with appropriate funding for all the services they provide, including those related to skills, training and knowledge exchange;
- Making sure rural youth and young farmers' organisations are involved in discussions at local, regional, national and EU level when designing relevant policies;
- Providing more detailed, comparable and up-to-date data on young farmers and rural youth in order to better target policies;
- Facilitating international cooperation in the field of participation of people in rural areas.





The European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA) acts as a forum for dialogue between young farmers and European decision makers, aiming at promoting a younger and innovative agricultural sector across Europe and creating good working and living conditions for young people setting up in farming and those who are already young farmers. Established in 1958, CEJA represents around 2 million young farmers from 23 countries and 32 national member organisations. www.ceja.eu



MIJARC Europe is a coordination network for rural and Christian youth organisations all over the continent, representing over 130,000 young people from rural areas in 13 European countries. The organisation's aim is to defend the future and the interests of the rural world and the people who live in it, young people especially, and to support and encourage young people to take joint action in order to promote training and education in the rural environment. www.mijarceurope.net



Rural Youth Europe (RYEurope) is a European NGO for rural youth established in 1957 and working to promote and activate young people in the countryside. It provides international training possibilities and works as an intermediary between national organisations, youth organisations and public institutions on a European level. Rural Youth Europe is a member-led organisation: democratically constituted and led by young people for young people. Rural Youth Europe has 20 members organisations in 17 countries and represents around 500,000 young people all around Europe. www.ruralityoutheurope.com