

Young Farmers are Key **in the** **Future CAP**

Foreword

Generational renewal and supporting young farmers has never been more critical than it is today. With only 6% of young farmers under 35¹, policy makers and civil society must ask themselves who will produce the food to feed families in the future? The answer is simple. By supporting young farmers today, we can provide the food for society tomorrow.

I would like to thank all involved in this document, from our member organisations who tirelessly worked on its creation, to Prof. Rogier Schulte and Dr. Roel Jongeneel from the Wageningen University and Research Centre who completed a scientific review of our final papers. Without the help of every one of you this wouldn't have been possible.

Alan Jagoe, CEJA President

A healthy and sustainable food system is emerging as one of the key challenges at the top of the European policy agenda and is the topic of public discourse in many countries. How can we ensure that all have access to a nutritious diet, and at the same time sustain a healthy environment? Can we conceive a food system that simultaneously delivers a healthy diet to consumers, innovation to the food industry, and an equitable livelihood to farmers? One thing is for certain: farming in 2050 will be just as different from what we know today, as today's farming is radically different from what we knew 37 years ago in 1980. At Wageningen University and Research (WUR), we are developing a variety of solutions aimed at building vital and sustainable rural communities in Europe and beyond, that are resilient to the challenges that will emerge this century.

However, we depend on the daily decisions of millions of farmers across Europe to turn solutions into practice. CEJA represents those farmers who will be the custodians of our food and our countryside by 2050 and are therefore key in delivering the future that we envisage as a society. In this light, we are heartened by CEJA's position papers that underpin their submission "Young Farmers are Key in the Future CAP". These position papers chart a positive approach to embracing tomorrow's challenges, and identify constructive pathways to enabling young farmers to meet society's many expectations. We commend CEJA on building a vision for European farming that may be sustained, in every sense of the word, into an uncertain future. Their submission makes our scientific quest for solutions rewarding and gives cause for optimism about the future of rural Europe that we are jointly contributing to.

Prof Rogier Schulte and Dr Roel Jongeneel (WUR)

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/rural-area-economics/briefs/pdf/06_en.pdf



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Young Farmers are Key in the Future CAP

We are entering into a period of planning and action for the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and with this there is a need to call for an **ambitious, consistent and larger budget** for the agriculture sector. CEJA believes this could be used to ensure increased stability in the sector, provide food security, public goods and underpin the EU family farming model. This will also ensure that rural areas across the EU will be territories where people can live and work freely, and ultimately contribute to **jobs, growth and investments** in the local economy.

The health, safety and wellbeing of farmers must be central to all future policies. To ensure this there must be a free, annual, mandatory, health and safety course for every active farmer including a health and wellbeing check-up.

It is crucial that **policies across the CAP fully support generational renewal**, allow clear exit paths and encourage co-operation between generations. Succession must be eased and promoted in order to reverse the ageing trend in the agricultural population and secure future food production in Europe and beyond.

Young farmers are eager to embrace innovation, smart agriculture and science based research to guarantee a sustainable, profitable and productive future for farming.

Cork 2.0 has laid the foundations for sustainable rural areas. It is important to ensure that **rural proofing** happens across all European policies, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development² (EAFRD) should therefore not be the only budgetary fund improving rural area infrastructure and growing rural areas.

CEJA fully supports the **simplification process of the CAP**; however this should not be an argument to introduce ineffective measures. Farmers must be the main beneficiaries of CAP simplification, with lower administrative and financial burdens. CAP payments should be paid within the year of application.

CEJA proposes that the **next CAP reform focus on 3 key areas: *Generational Renewal, Sustainable Economic Support, and Progressive and Proactive Environmental Measures***,

Many of the measures outlined in each of the chapters below are cross cutting measures and must be addressed **only to active farmers**.

Definition of Active Farmer

CEJA believes that the current definition of active farmer needs to be **strengthened, improved and remain mandatory** throughout the EU to better target supports. A proper definition on active

² https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020_en

farmer will help generational renewal, will drive structural change and aid land mobility. Whereby active farmers are those who: *take the financial responsibility for managing the business and production and who sell products individually or through cooperatives, are recognized as such by the public administration, and deliver public goods from their agricultural activity.*

The definition should also be improved through objective and tangible criteria at EU level. CEJA believes that:

- *Pensioners cannot receive both direct payments and a statutory pension.*
- *There must be a minimum level of agricultural education or experience required to be considered an active farmer.*
- *At EU level, there has to be a more comprehensive negative list of those excluded from being an active farmer, in which income levels and labour time are included.*
- *At national level, Member States have to include further criteria within the negative list and specify the percentage of income levels and labour time.*

Generational Renewal

If the European agricultural sector is to have a future, an EU-wide strategy for generational renewal for young people is imperative. In order to achieve this, all measures have to be **young farmer proofed**.

To this end, the definition of a “young farmer”:

1. *Is an active farmer.*
2. *Is under 41 years of age.*
3. *Has the required level of agricultural education.*

The two biggest barriers for young farmers are **access to land and to credit**.

To address structural and regional challenges in an innovative way, funding for national or regional organisations engaged in promoting and facilitating matching services between young and old farmers should be available through a **Land Mobility Service**.

These organisations should be tasked with actively promoting succession planning, facilitating and encouraging various sustainable collaborative arrangements such as partnerships, share farming, contract rearing and leasing between farmers.

Therefore, there is a need for a mechanism to *allow older farmers a chance to step back or retire* and allow themselves a lesser work load while assisting young farmers in getting established.

CEJA calls on both the Commission and Member States to increase support for young farmers and facilitate generational renewal and land mobility in the agriculture sector in pertinent areas such as taxation, land management, land inheritance laws, as well as farmland sales and rental prices, among others. Furthermore young farmers should have a pre-emption right for public

owned and agricultural land. Public support measures should be put in place to train young farmers on the different kind of property and leasing methods, aided by an external facilitator with knowledge of the land and succession laws in that particular Member State.

Facilitating access to **succession brokers** for farming families in all EU Member States is necessary in order to broach the difficult conversation about the transfer of land between generations, CEJA also calls the EU to pay a particular attention to young people not coming from a farming background by implementing a mandatory program to facilitate access for new young entrants.

Urbanization and industrialization are reducing the amount of agricultural land available to farmers. Legislation should be introduced at MS level in order to reduce farmland sold for non-agriculture activities and support the re-use of industrial wasteland and put in place additional farmland compensation in the event of land use change.

To achieve a sustainable agriculture sector young farmers require access to credit, which will assist them in areas such as gaining access to land to set up their farm, acquiring new or used machinery and diversifying activities on their farm.

Young farmers must be provided with financial backing to access credit for investments and other inputs, therefore CEJA advocates for:

- An improved cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Investment Fund (EIF) to foster the creation of financial instruments dedicated to young farmers across all Member States.
- Young farmers to be able to avail of public guarantees without the risk of facing disallowances when applying for other measures in the CAP.
- The encouragement of commercial banks to offer preferential services and preferential credit rates for young farmers through potential incentives provided by the State.
- An increased availability of both short and long term loans with low interest rates for young farmers.
- There needs to be innovative financial tools to help farmers in times of volatility and also to involve stakeholders in the agriculture and food industries in order to contribute to these new models of funding.

To ensure generational renewal in rural areas CEJA calls for a mandatory provision of **start-up** and continuous **investment aid** in every Member State be made available throughout the entire budgetary period. Agricultural education and a clear business plan are required by young farmers to qualify for such start-up & investment aid.

Knowledge transfer and advisory services should be available to farmers in areas including technical, economic, environmental and social awareness around issues such as succession.

Systems that promote the exchange of experience between farmers are required for effective and efficient knowledge transfer. There is a need for continuous up-skilling and training to be made available to farmers. A voucher system for young farmers should be in place in order to access knowledge and training services. **Vocational training**, provided in rural areas, has to be modernised. **Communication between farmers and consumers** is necessary for consumer awareness of EU standards and quality of food production.

Young people in rural areas must not be discriminated in terms of access to services afforded to their urban colleagues. There is a need to ensure a countryside in which young farmers can develop their farms and support their families.

The **National Reserve** must be continuously and adequately financially supported in order to ensure that every young farmer be brought up to the national average of each Member State. This National Reserve should also cater for farmers who are below the national average, however young farmers must always be the priority.

Sustainable economic support

As the most vulnerable in the sector, European young farmers are exposed not only to local risks but also global risks linked to supply and demand in fast-changing global markets. There is a need for new and innovative measures in order to help farmers' **competitiveness and resilience**.

To increase transparency and the trust of civil society it is imperative that **support measures must only go to Active Farmers**.

It is important to recognise the role that the CAP has in supporting farm incomes and stimulating growth in agri-entrepreneurship and rural employment. However, the past period has shown that the current measures are not sufficient to create enough stability for European farmers. Therefore, the future CAP must be reoriented to ensure the viability of EU family farms in all regions, territories and LFAs.

CEJA believes that a variety of measures at farm level are needed, including a combination of **hectare based** payments, **activity based** payments and in vulnerable sectors **coupled support**. A **top up for all young farmers** must be provided in each on completion of a farm business development plan.

CEJA advocates for frontloaded coupled payments for vulnerable sectors across the EU while respecting fair competition and incentivising quality, therefore adding value to these products.

Young farmers must benefit from complementary **innovative risk management tools** (such as counter cyclic, mutual funds, insurance schemes etc) that sustain, as well as enhance, farm viability, rural landscapes and safeguard young farmers against a plethora of risks, from depressed market prices and overproduction, to uncertainties or constraints related to international agreements. Innovative risk management tools will assist young farmers to develop their businesses more efficiently.

High quality and reliable information must be provided, in addition to the provision of strong decision-making tools so that young farmers may use risk management tools effectively and self-manage their own risks.

In line with the final report delivered by the Agricultural Market Task Force³, CEJA supports the recommendation to **strengthen the position of farmers in the supply chain**. Therefore it is essential to reinforce the bargaining power of farmers through actions such as establishing **Producers Organisations**, supporting **co-operatives and other forms of collective approach**.

Proactive and progressive environmental measures

Young farmers are the new environmentalists. They are well aware of agricultural sustainability issues and challenges and realize their role in safeguarding the environment into the future. **Young farmers**, as **custodians of the countryside**, believe that the work they do on their farms and in the countryside **must be recognised as a public good for civil society**. This will ensure the protection and enhancement of environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

CEJA calls for a package of proactive and progressive measures which can be realistically delivered at farm level. All environmental measures must acknowledge the principle of a Europe of regions; differences across regions of Europe should be taken into consideration and environmental policy devised to reflect and protect these.

In order to deliver the best environmental benefits while simultaneously ensuring profitable production from sustainable agricultural practices, a combination of environmental **results-based and management-based** supports must be used. A collective approach for implementing specific environmental measures should also be an option for farmers in the new CAP, and a set of measures should be dedicated to enhancing the production of renewable energies and energy efficiencies at farm level.

At the forefront of young farmers' land management practices are environmental protection, **biodiversity** conservation and **climate change mitigation**. Central to this is the prevention of agriculture land being sealed up by urbanisation and industrialisation.⁴

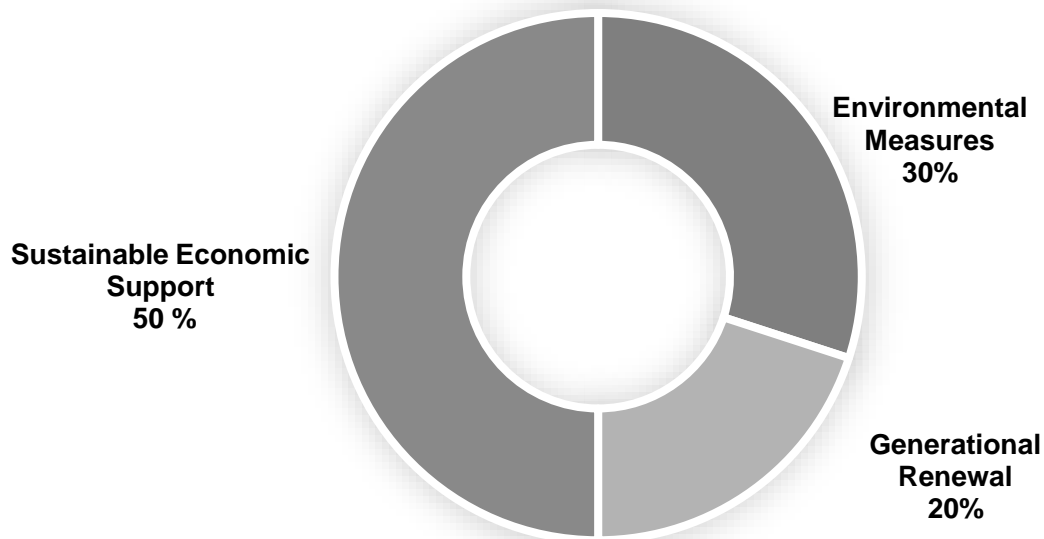
³ https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/agri-markets-task-force_en

⁴ CEJA position paper "Young Farmers protecting Soils by optimising Land Use"

Distribution of the future CAP budget

Considering the above proposals and needs of European Young Farmers, CEJA calls for the enlarged CAP budget to be distributed as follows:

- **20% to be allocated to various measures and instruments specifically targeted to *Generational Renewal***
- **50% to be allocated to *Sustainable Economic Support***
- **30% to be allocated to *Proactive and Progressive Environmental Measures***



▪ Environmental Measures ▪ Generational Renewal ▪ Sustainable Economic Support

This document was created as an amalgamation of CEJA's 7 position papers. The remainder of this document contains these position papers, created through consultation with CEJA's member organisations and scientific review by Dr. Roel Jongeneel and by Prof. Rogier Schulte (Wageningen University and Research).



CEJA POSITION PAPER ON THE DEFINITION OF ACTIVE FARMER

The reformed CAP 2014-2020 introduced a definition of Active Farmer in the Article 9(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

On the 14th of September 2016, the European Commission (EC) published the Omnibus Regulation, building on Commissioner Hogan's commitment to simplify the Common Agricultural Policy and following the four simplification measures already introduced over the past year. The EC proposal includes greater discretion in the application of the 'active farmer' clause at national level.

CEJA has welcomed the definition as a first step in order to better target direct payments. However, CEJA believes that this definition needs to be strengthened, improved and remain mandatory throughout the EU. Whereby active farmers are those who:

- take the financial responsibility for managing the business and production and who sell products individually or through cooperatives;
- are recognized as such by the public administration, and;
- deliver public goods from their agricultural activity.

In addition, while CEJA proposes to maintain the current definition, the definition should also be improved through objective and tangible criteria at EU level, which Member States could decline as their definition of 'active farmer'. Having a proper definition on active farmer will help generational renewal, will drive structural change and aid land mobility.

Therefore CEJA believes this criteria supplementary to the current definition has to include that:

- Pensioners cannot receive both direct payments and a statutory pension.
- There must be a minimum level of agricultural education or experience required to be considered an active farmer.
- At EU level, there has to be a more comprehensive negative list (black list) of those excluded from being an active farmer, in which income levels and labour time are included. At national level, Member States have to include further criteria within the negative list and to specify the percentage of income levels and labour time.



CEJA POSITION PAPER ON ACCESS TO LAND AND CREDIT

If the European agricultural sector is to have a future, an EU-wide strategy for access to agricultural land for young people is imperative. Today access to land is the most significant barrier for young people wanting to enter the agricultural sector, and this is compounded by current limited access to credit for young people across the EU. Young Europeans' preparedness to innovate and invest is crucial for the future of rural areas. Financial support through instruments targeting young farmers exclusively, such as prioritized access to credit and other financial measures such as guarantees, is necessary to halt the ageing of the farming population, and secure farm successions with the objective of having a multifunctional agriculture sector supporting farmers, farm families and cooperatives.

To aid young farmers' preparedness, advisory services in a variety of areas (e.g. land management, inheritance law, business support, marketing advice and other financial advice) can be easily accessible and free of charge for young farmers.

Access to land

One of the factors that has a major influence on this problem concerns the system of decoupled payment entitlements which induces a capitalization of the value of the direct payment in the price of the land and contributes to the increase in the pressure of land. CEJA calls for a modernization of the decoupled payment system with the aim that direct payment should not be only linked to land.

CEJA also calls for a strengthening of the definition of the active farmer, in particular the prohibition for farmers who receive a retirement pension from being considered as active farmers. This will lead to increased mobility of land for young farmers.

Moreover, and despite the great differences between land markets across Europe, CEJA asks for:

The promotion of new models of collaboration between generations of farmers through:

- partnership;
- share-farming;
- long-term leasing and other long term arrangements;
- farm to farm arrangements, and

- land mobility services.

To aid access to land for young farmers CEJA calls for:

- A mandatory link between access to land and the definition of active farmer.
- Young farmers having a pre-emption right for public owned and agricultural land in general.
- The support of farm succession or transition planning;
- The use of public support measures including among others fostering public-private land transfer initiatives.
- The creation of a professional and public agency with the aim to act as a broker in land acquisition.
- The use of public support to train young farmers on the different kinds of property and leasing.
- Tools that ensure full management transition of the enterprise (on and off paper) allowing the young farmer to make entrepreneurial management decisions.

Accordingly, CEJA calls on the Member States to increase support for young farmers and facilitate generational renewal and land mobility in the agriculture sector in pertinent areas such as taxation, land management, land inheritance laws, as well as farmland sales and rental prices among others. CEJA also calls the EU to pay particular attention to young people not coming from a farming background by implementing a mandatory program to facilitate access for new young entrants.

CEJA proposes legislative action to facilitate the establishment of national programs aimed at facilitating land mobility/succession planning services. Regulation of such services must be carried out by managing authorities.

Facilitating access to succession brokers free of charge for farming families in all EU Member States is necessary in order to broach the difficult conversation about the transfer of land between generations, aided by public bodies or a private external facilitator who has knowledge of the land succession laws in that particular Member State.

CEJA maintains that state aid exemption for land acquisition for young farmers is essential in order to increase the number of young farmers in the EU. Member States should be obliged to communicate annually updated data on the sales market: price of land and areas sold by use (cropland or grassland) in order to improve the transparency of this market.

Urbanization and industrialization are reducing the amount of agricultural land available to farmers. Therefore CEJA calls for the need for the creation of an EU-wide long term strategic land use plan, which is assessed periodically (eg. Farmland/total land ratio) and prioritizes the optimal use of agricultural land available to farmers. Legislation should be introduced at Member State

level in order to reduce farmland sold for non-agriculture activities and support the re-use of industrial wasteland and put in place additional farmland compensation in the event of land use change.

Access to credit:

To achieve a sustainable agriculture sector young farmers require access to credit, which will assist them in areas such as:

- gaining access to land to set up their farm, to buy out their parents, their siblings or other farmers who currently own the farm, thus driving generational renewal, or;
- acquiring new or used machinery or other material investments for the farm, or to modernize current machinery or methods of production on the farm to facilitate young farmers in stimulating new advancements in agricultural innovation, or;
- diversifying activities on the farm or providing added value to the methods of production or marketing and selling of the farm products to increase farm viability and enhance the economic sustainability of rural areas.
- Access to credit can be greatly enhanced for young farmers by the provision of financial backing for investments and other inputs during some of the most difficult years of their farming enterprise when investments are high and returns low.

Therefore CEJA advocates for:

- An improved cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Investment Fund (EIF) to foster the creation of financial instruments dedicated to young farmers across all Member States.
- Young farmers to be able to avail of public guarantees without the risk of facing disallowances when applying for other measures in the CAP.
- the encouragement of commercial banks to offer preferential services and preferential credit rates for young farmers through potential incentives provided by the State, and
- An increased availability of both short and long term loans with low interest rates for young farmers.
- Innovative financial tools to help farmers in times of volatility and also to involve stakeholders in the agriculture and food industries in order to contribute to these new models of funding. (Concerning this point, CEJA makes reference to its position paper on Risk Management Tools for further).



CEJA POSITION PAPER ON ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES

Young Farmers are the new Environmentalists

Young Farmers are environmentally conscious and are well-educated on current and future environmental and agricultural sustainability issues and challenges. At the forefront of their land management practices are environmental protection, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation.

Young farmers want agriculture and agricultural landscapes to be recognised as public goods and not only protecting but also enhancing the environment. Young farmers endeavour to sustain agricultural positive externalities that benefit civil society (such as protection of biodiversity, human health and wellbeing, food production, enhancing soil structure and fertility) and ensure the continuation of sustainable rural landscapes.

Young farmers are custodians of the countryside and are eager to embrace the implementation of innovative technology, science based research and farm management practices to guarantee a sustainable, profitable and productive future for farming. Young farmers are also willing to carry out environmental measures at farm level, where the decisions to safeguard the environment, included for example in international climate change agreements, take place in practice. Furthermore, to achieve effective environmental policy that is all-encompassing and that acknowledges young farmers as the future of sustainable agriculture, young farmers are willing to engage with all stakeholders and policy and decision makers.

As Young farmers we are the new environmentalists. **The principle of increasing sustainably, that being environmental, social and economic, is more than just a concept for us as young farmers.** The effective use of inputs and optimization of natural resources will ensure that civil society and a growing world population will have a secure and a sustainable source of food into the future. The new CAP should focus on achieving consistency and harmonization across environmental measures that are practical for farmers to implement.

To realize young farmers' role in safeguarding the environment into the future, CEJA would like to underline the following aspects:

- All environmental measures must acknowledge the principle of a Europe of regions; differences across regions of Europe should be taken into consideration and environmental policy devised to reflect and protect these.
- In order to deliver the best environmental benefits while simultaneously ensuring profitable production from sustainable agricultural practices, a combination of environmental results-based and management-based payments must be used.
- A collective approach for implementing specific environmental measures should be an option for farmers in the new CAP.
- A set of measures should be dedicated to enhancing the production of renewable energies and energy efficiencies at farm level. This must be done within a frame-work where bioenergy does not compete with concerns regarding sustainability and food security.

CEJA makes reference to our position paper on “Young Farmers protecting Soils by optimising Land Use” and asks for a harmonized EU legislation on land use in order to prevent agricultural land from being used for other purposes.



CEJA POSITION PAPER ON RISK MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Today European young farmers are competing in an increasingly competitive global agricultural market. European young farmers already established in business and new entrants to the sector are exposed not only to local risks inherently associated with agriculture as a profession - **such as climatic and sanitary risks - but also global risks that are wide-reaching and linked to supply and demand in fast-changing global markets.**

Risk management tools are instruments which minimize the impact of reduction of farmer incomes caused by external factors beyond the control of the farmers. Market volatility leading to crises throughout the agricultural sector additionally contribute to young farmers' lack of security. Learning from today's crisis requires innovative solutions in order to overcome and prevent future crisis. While lessons can be learnt from these situations, crises often threaten to jeopardize young farmers' place as the next generation of farming.

Currently in the agriculture sector access to education and information services is increasing, as is the awareness of young farmers of the nature of different risks. Volatility within their profession is predominantly attributed to a repetition of extended periods of low prices and significant income variability, thus creating an accumulation of uncertainties.

In these circumstances young farmers are most vulnerable as they are more financially exposed. Consequently, high quality and reliable information on market situations must be provided, in addition to the provision of strong decision-making tools so that young farmers may use risk management tools effectively and self-manage their own risks.

As the future of farming, young farmers benefit from innovative risk management tools that sustain as well as enhance farm viability, rural landscapes and safeguard young farmers against a plethora of risks, from depressed market prices and over production, to uncertainties or constraints related to international agreements. Innovative risk management tools will assist young farmers to develop their businesses more efficiently.

In order to sustain and enhance farm viability for young farmers, CEJA calls for the following risk management measures for the CAP post-2020:

- The implementation of tools to anticipate crisis through the Common Market Organisation so that risk prevention is carried out.
- At EU level, a comprehensive list of risk management and insurance measures must be implemented by each Member State such as:
 - Climatic and sanitary risk,
 - Countercyclical tools,
 - Insurance schemes,
 - Mutual funds,
 - Individual precautionary fund,
 - Loans from financial institutions including the EIB,
 - Improving the system of futures market.
- We encourage the European Commission to reinforce the Income Stabilisation Tool (IST). The income threshold for compensation must be attractive to farmers, especially young farmers, to guarantee high initial adoption of the measure. The IST must initially be a voluntary measure at farmer level with the view to be made a mandatory measure in the future CAP.
- Access to appropriate financial instruments necessary to anticipate and combat crises in the agricultural sector.
- The introduction of annual budget flexibility into the EU financial framework in order to facilitate efficient implementation of risk management tools.



CEJA POSITION PAPER ON DIRECT PAYMENTS

It is important to recognise the role that Direct Payments can have in supporting farm incomes and stimulating growth in agri-entrepreneurship and rural employment. But the future CAP for direct payments must be reoriented in order to ensure the viability of EU family farms in all regions, territories and LFAs.

In order to reach these targets and improve Generational Renewal we need a variety of measures at farm level. These include a combination of hectare based payments, activity based payments and in vulnerable sectors coupled support. A top up for young farmers must be provided in each.

Direct Payments must only go to support Active Farmers.

CEJA advocates for frontloaded coupled payments for vulnerable sectors across the EU respecting fair competition. At Member State level, a mechanism should be put in place which incentivises quality and added value to their products.

However the past period has shown that these measures are not sufficient to create enough stability for European farmers, therefore CEJA calls for new and innovative measures in order to help farmers' competitiveness and resilience.

It is essential to modernize the decoupled system of Direct Payments which is no longer the appropriate response to market fluctuations and prolonged and repeated price declines that we have known for several years.

This system also generates a capitalization of the amount of the Direct Payments in the price of the land, which contributes in particular to the increase in the pressure of land.

Direct Payments should not be only linked to land.

Direct Payments present a mechanism to progressively move towards policy objectives through tools such as supporting risk management tools, results and management based environmental measures, financial instruments, public goods etc. as described in detail throughout our policy papers.

CEJA fully supports the young farmer top up measures included in the current CAP, but calls for it to be significantly strengthened in order to ensure that all “young farmers” who complete a farm business development plan are able to avail of these measures.

To this end, the definition of a “young farmer” is:

1. An active farmer⁵.
2. Under 41 years of age.
3. To have the required level of agricultural education.

Additionally CEJA supports the principle of capping.

Furthermore, the National Reserve must be continuously and adequately financially supported in order to ensure that every young farmer be brought up to the national average of each Member State. This National Reserve should also cater for farmers who are below the national average, however young farmers must always be the priority.

⁵ To fully achieve this there is a need to ensure the definition of Active Farmer is strengthened and clarified.



CEJA POSITION PAPER ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

A properly funded Rural Development Programme (RDP) will ensure that rural development areas across the EU will be territories where people can live and work freely, ultimately contribute to the growth of jobs, and invest in the local economy.

Farmers and the agricultural sector are vital to achieving this, and it is for this reason CEJA calls for a minimum of 10% of the entire RDP to be spent on holistic measures directly targeting young farmers' future.

It is crucial that the RDP be able to provide for the agricultural sector, fully supporting those entering, or assisting in Generational Renewal measures to allow clear exit paths and encourage co-operation between generations.

Building upon the strong foundations of the Cork 2.0 Declaration CEJA has identified a number of key young farmer proofed areas to build upon to ensure an effective future RDP.

1. Start-up & continuous investment aid

In order to ensure the development of rural areas there is a need for:

- Mandatory provision of start-up aid in every Member State to be made available throughout the entire budgetary period.
- Mandatory continuous investment aid, providing specific support for young farmers.
- Maintaining specific support for young farmers in areas such as LFAs and disadvantaged areas.
- Agricultural education and a clear business plan are required in order to qualify for start-up & investment aid.

2. Land Mobility Scheme and Succession Planning

A strong definition of an active farmer will mobilise land away from inactive farmers (otherwise known as armchair farmers). European young farmers face various structural challenges in terms of access to land, land mobility, succession planning and inheritance. To address these structural and regional challenges in an innovative way, funding for national or regional organisations engaged in promoting and facilitating matching services between young and old farmers should be available under the RDP.

The above mentioned organisations should be tasked with actively promoting succession planning, facilitating and encouraging various sustainable collaborative arrangements such as partnerships, share farming, contract rearing and leasing between farmers. Developing innovative collaborative services in Member States will help tackle intergenerational succession and help young farmers and young people to gain access to an important strategic resource to commence and develop their farming careers.

Therefore, there is a need for a mechanism to allow older farmers a chance to step back or retire and allow themselves a lesser work load while assisting a young farmer in getting set up.

3. Knowledge transfer

There must be better links from theory to practice for all parties involved and directly applicable at a farm level. Systems that promote the exchange of experience and knowledge between farmers are required for efficient and effective knowledge transfer. There is a need for:

- A system of knowledge transfer organised between farmers of different regions, sectors and generations, both for individuals and groups of farmers.
- Communication and transparency, which are key to ensuring that consumers know how their food is produced, what farmers do on their farms and the benefits of the CAP to civil society. This will create a base of respect towards food, its production and its contributions to the environment, informing citizens and consumers on the agricultural productions in the 21st century.
- Continuous professional development of farmers through continuous up-skilling and training.
- In the absence of an advisory service, an affordable one should be established to optimise the production systems. This could be either privatised or State owned.
- A voucher system for young farmers should be in place in order to access these services.
- Knowledge transfer and the advice received not to be limited to financial aspects, or to the analysis of criteria for access to the investment or start up aid.

Young farmer organisations across Europe support the transfer of knowledge to their members and should be supported through the RDP.

By creating and strengthening an ongoing cooperation between farmers, universities, NGOs and other stakeholders there will be an improvement in the position of science based innovation in the future of European Agriculture and policy.

There is a need to modernise the vocational training provided in rural regions, accessing and increasing European Social Funding (ESF) given to vocational training in rural areas.

4. Empowering rural area infrastructures

Young people in rural areas must not be discriminated in terms of access to services afforded to urban colleagues. The same facilities that are made available in towns and cities – such as high speed broadband – should also be present in rural areas. There is a need to ensure a countryside on which young farmers can develop their farm.

Concerning this point, CEJA makes reference to its position paper on Smart Agriculture for further details.

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) should not be the only budgetary fund involved in the support for growing rural areas.

5. Farmer Wellbeing

Due to on farm pressures, there is a need to address the physical and mental health, safety and welfare of farmers through training, education and innovation, to ensure adequate awareness of health and safety risks on farms. This requires the creation of a free yearly health and wellbeing check-up and a free mandatory health and safety course for every active farmer.

6. Farm Assistance

There is a need to develop a service to allow assistance to farmers, while creating a viable replacement scheme allowing for days off from the farm in the event of, or such as:

- Sickness/Injury
- Holiday
- Training
- Maternity/Paternity leave
- Engagement in young farmer organisations

7. Collective actions

- The CAP must facilitate farmers who act collectively through various cooperative means: on environment, food distribution, etc. Support must be focused on these collective actions.
- The CAP must encourage the setting up of Producers Organisations to reinforce the bargaining power of farmers. There has to be a support to the functioning of the Producers organisation.
- Farmers who act collectively through various co-operative means should have access to all measures under the RDP. These stretch to machinery rings, marketing products, and other co-operative farming methods.



CEJA POSITION PAPER ON SMART AGRICULTURE

Today European young farmers are competing in a rapidly developing evolving agricultural sector, with ongoing research into new techniques offering new sustainable ways to farm. Established young farmers and new entrants already face a variety of smart farming options to improve their daily work, but also face more practical accessibility issues.

The EU's current rural development policy, aims to bring farming into the 21st century, through enhancing the viability and competitiveness of agriculture, and promoting innovative farm technologies and sustainable resource management. Smart farming has the potential to improve farm returns with better resource management through innovation.

Adoption of innovation could be implemented on an individual or collective basis.

CEJA welcomes this direction but recommends ways to ensure their successful implementation achieved through the analysis, optimisation and use of real-time data. These include:

- Increasing stability and access to quality high speed internet across Europe to facilitate e-farming and e-commerce.
- Research into using technology and techniques which enables sustainable farming that has a low environmental impact, generate growth and promote social cohesion.
- The use/ownership of data gathered from smart farming methods to improve current farming techniques.

However, while data driven farming could prove useful in the future, it is not yet clear how data protection functions inside the agricultural sector. Without an improved understanding at an EU level it will be difficult to develop partnerships on data sharing between farms on the ground, which could aid in teaching and best practice farming.

Therefore, in terms of data collection and sharing CEJA presents that:

- Recognising farmers as both generators and owners of data, research is required in to how data can be made accessible to farmers, either through training or partnerships with organisations that are able to perform data processing.
- Further discussion is needed on data privacy, especially regarding who holds ownership of information gathered from innovative tools, and how it can be appropriately managed.

- Information should always be readily made available to those who look for transparency within the agriculture sector.

Additionally CEJA believes that alongside modern advancements current and past practices continue to remain relevant. As such:

- There is a need for continued and effective use of current technology so as not to become reliant on the provisions of new tools.
- Innovation must also continue to happen outside the realms of technology, through training and development of farming practices, and business models including marketing and selling tools.



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