

EU ELECTIONS 2024

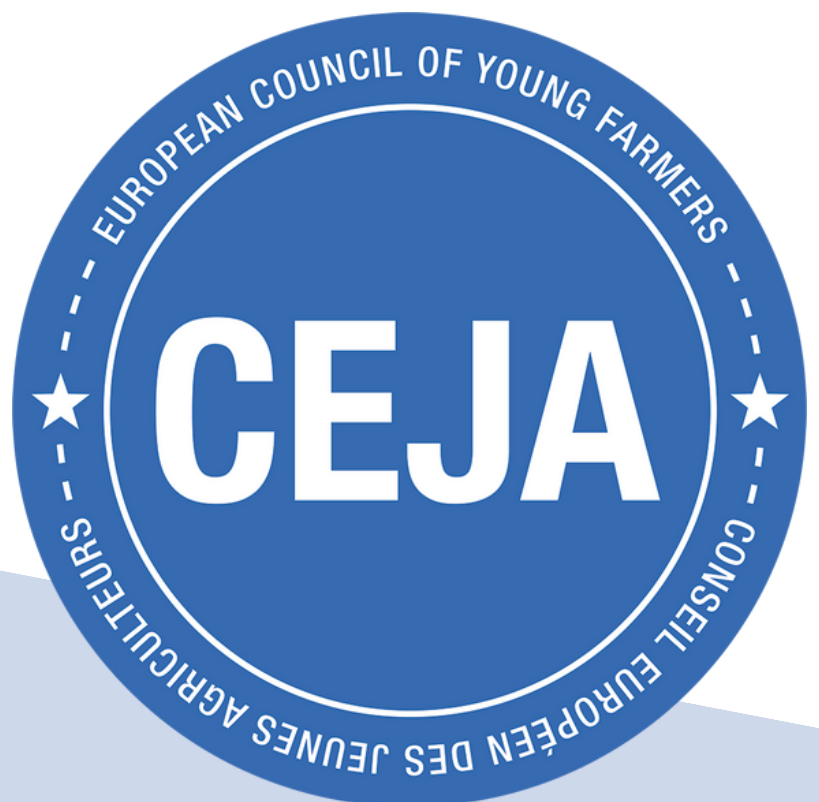


CEJA MANIFESTO

FOR GENERATIONAL RENEWAL IN AGRICULTURE

As the European Union gears up for the forthcoming elections, the European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA) recognises the pivotal moment it represents in determining the future of agriculture on our continent. With, in 2020, only 11.9% of farm managers in the EU under the age of 40, there is challenge on which everyone can agree: generational renewal in agriculture.

CEJA unveils **10 critical points that demand the unwavering consideration of candidates** competing for seats in the European Parliament. They not only underscore the urgency of addressing the issue of generational renewal with good conditions for farm transmission, but also chart a course towards a more attractive, vibrant, and resilient agricultural sector for Europe.



FIND MORE ON WWW.CEJA.EU

1 ACCESS TO INVESTMENT

Young farmers are more likely to see their loan applications rejected by the bank in comparison to farmers over 40 years old. The main reasons for rejection are the perceived higher-risk profiles of young farmers, the lack of viable business plan, as well as their lack of capital and collaterals. Helping young farmers' investment with simple and bureaucracy-free financial instruments is essential, with guarantee instruments or risk sharing loans, for which the memorandum of understanding between DG AGRI and the European Investment Bank has proved success. More broadly, a reflection together with banks and other private stakeholders about the future of sustainable agricultural investments should take place. It must give a real acceleration to investments for the replacement of existing plant and equipment with a positive technological and environmental impact, so that the entire value chain can evolve. This would facilitate change management at farm level: new practices, new equipment, alternative sources of energy...



CEJA policy paper, "Smart farmers for smart farming", part 3, 2023

2 CLIMATE CHANGE AND WATER

Young farmers face the pressing challenge of adapting to climate change while managing vital natural resources. They are enthusiastic about forging a sustainable path forward, while maintaining an economically viable activity. Ensuring the sustainability of soils and nutrients, coupled with effective risk management in dealing with nature's unpredictability is paramount. Access to water is essential for agriculture. Climate change's impact on production and food security cannot be understated. Young farmers being part of the solutions, they require the necessary tools, guidance, education, and support to adapt and mitigate climate change.



CEJA position paper, "Young farmers' call for climate action", 2019

3 ACCESS TO LAND

Access to land is the primary obstacle to the installation and development of farming activities and a central barrier to generational renewal in EU agriculture. Young farmers require available land, which they can buy or rent, and in which they will be able to invest sustainably, with long-term certainty. Actions are needed to tackle high prices, harsh competition with non-farming actors, the impeded land mobility as well as the lack of data & transparency.



CEJA position paper "Access to land: Are we losing the European plot?", 2023

4 FUTURE OF THE CAP

CEJA calls for an openness to rethink the CAP, keeping the treaties objectives in mind and the centrality of this policy. This entails a focus on using instruments tailored to the specific needs of young farmers. Such an approach implies allocating a larger budget for young farmers' instruments, giving due consideration to promising initiatives that can promote intergenerational cooperation, and being open to questioning the overall structure of the policy. The reflection on the CAP should extend beyond its financial support aspect. It should encompass greater effort for investment and risk management instruments. An analysis of the tools implemented with the current programming is necessary in order to assess their efficiency and to proceed to a fair allocation of resources, so that those made available are not wasted. CEJA has already initiated discussions regarding the CAP post-2027 and is open to engaging in dialogue on this matter.



CEJA Press releases – "One month to the long-awaited CAP: a step that cannot be the last", December 2022

"Young farmers in the new CAP: is the Member States' approach truly strategic?", June 2022



CEJA Internal Report – Workshop on CAP Strategic Plans, April 2022

5 INNOVATION, EDUCATION, KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

To thrive in a technically demanding profession, upskilling farmers, farm workers and advisors is vital. Tailored advisory services covering various areas are needed, as well as promoting young farmers' participation in knowledge networks and research initiatives to multiply learning opportunities as much as possible. Young farmers also play a pivotal role for innovation. Ensuring their access to affordable, safe, and effective tools is essential for addressing the sector's challenges and fostering sustainability.



CEJA policy paper, "Smart farmers for smart farming", 2023

6

GOVERNANCE & LEGAL CERTAINTY

Agriculture operates on long-term cycles and requires substantial investments. It cannot thrive amidst excessive uncertainties. Fair competition and clear, comprehensible regulations are vital, along with realistic, coherent and fair targets. Following the EU elections, the delineation of competencies among different parliamentary committees, such as ENVI and AGRI, must prioritise efficiency and proper coordination over inter-committee rivalry and political games, ensuring that the best interests of young farmers and agriculture remain the priority.

7

INCOME AND POSITION IN THE VALUE CHAIN

In the farming sector, there is a persistent trend of inadequate income coupled with an unfair distribution of risks, disproportionately affecting primary producers. Farmers have limited bargaining power, and too often, downstream actors, by buying at the minimum price possible, condition farmers to sell below their production cost. Below-cost-selling should be further investigated and banned. Prices, on their side, must be built in a “forward-looking way”, from the farm to the consumers, based on agricultural production costs. Fighting against unfair trading practices (UTPs) would mean the complete transposition by Member States and enforcement by all actors of the dedicated directive. To ensure transparency and authenticity, honest labelling practices must be enforced, preventing greenwashing unrelated to farming realities. In both short and long agri-food value chains, cooperation with all stakeholders should be promoted, with a central role of farmers’ organizations, in order to ensure fair conditions to farmers and a greater transparency along the chain. At international level, sustainable farming is not possible without fair trade and income.



CEJA position paper
“Resilience and
sustainability of the agrifood
supply chain”, 2021



CEJA position paper,
“From threat to
opportunity – an
international trade policy
fit for young farmers”,
2020

8

RURAL AREAS & LIVELIHOOD

The attractiveness of the sector and of rural areas must be at the centre of our preoccupations, to prevent them from being depopulated. Many rural inhabitants feel left behind by the society and policymakers. Rural areas know a lack of connectivity, low-income levels, and declining access to different types of public services such as education or healthcare. Farming is more than just an economic endeavour. It is about an entire way of life, for which work-life balance and mental health matter. We need coherence between the different levels of governance to make rural areas more attractive to the younger generation, with a momentum on the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas.



CEJA Manifesto for 2019 EU
elections, Empowering young
farmers and rural youth



CEJA's vision on the
long-term vision for
rural areas

9

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT AND FUNDING

The active involvement of youth in policymaking is of utmost importance. By offering support and maintaining an open dialogue with young farmers organisations, policymakers can tap into the fresh perspectives and innovative ideas that the younger generation brings to the table. Their insights and experiences should be taken seriously, as they are not only the backbone of the farming sector’s longevity but also the most eager to implement sustainable and forward-thinking practices. By actively involving youth in policymaking, we ensure that future policies are considering the aspirations and concerns of younger generations who will inherit and shape the future of agriculture. Supporting youth involvement encompasses the provision of essential funding to bolster young farmers organisations, individual young farmers, and agricultural education.

10

A BETTER CONSIDERATION OF THE DIVERSITY OF FARMING SYSTEMS

Recognising the diversity of EU farming systems begins with transforming biased perceptions of the sector and enhancing society's understanding of its multifaceted nature. We must bridge the gap between agriculture and the rest of society, fostering a holistic view of farming. While organic farming plays a significant role, sustainability encompasses more pathways, practices, and sectors, in all types of systems. This diversity means there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach. It is about celebrating the richness of different approaches. Europe must send a resounding message about the importance and diversity of agriculture, including a positive and constructive vision on the role of livestock. Agriculture is strategic in the EU bioeconomy, social cohesion and viability of rural areas. Farmers are the undeniable basis of food production and of our food systems, which must not be concentrated in the hands of a few actors.



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