



EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF YOUNG FARMERS
CONSEIL EUROPÉEN DES JEUNES AGRICULTEURS
EUROPÄISCHER RAT DER JUNGLANDWIRTE

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STATEMENT

CEJA rejects the notion of aspirational targets for young farmers

Last week, on 16th July, the European Commission unveiled its proposals for the future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), in what can be described as a chaotic and improvisational approach. Contradicting declarations from College members, important delays in accessing the proposals and incoherent figures; this is not what young farmers expect from their institutions. Amid the noise, a silent renouncement took place: despite announcements that the earmarked budget would double from 3% to 6% in the new CAP proposals, the texts published 48 hours later did not have any minimum financial ambition dedicated to young farmers. A few weeks away from the release of a Strategy for Generational Renewal, Europe's young farmers want to express their anger and disappointment at this major historical setback.

While the proposals published last week contain important developments for certain interventions related to generational renewal (e.g., starter pack for young farmers, setting-up support, investments, risk management), the absence of earmarking gives a false start to the Strategy for Generational Renewal to be released later this year. Even worse, it constitutes a major setback on the policy developments of the last 25 years when it comes to young farmers. As highlighted by CEJA President Peter Meedendorp: "We welcome the importance given to young farmers and their needs in the proposals, but the absence of earmarking brings us 25 years back in time, when we had to fight to get a miserable percentage of the policy's envelope. We reject the notion of aspirational targets because we know out of experience what happens in the absence of minimum budget allocation."

As demonstrated multiple times, CEJA is not opposed to change, as long as it is justified, transparent, and within a clear governance framework. The organisation itself is driving change on the front of policy design and implementation, especially when it comes to involving young people in farming. Also, with numbers of young farmers ever decreasing, the changes proposed last week appear in total contrast with the urgency and seriousness of EU agriculture's demographic challenges. Peter Meedendorp, in a message sent to young farmers, insisted on the importance of the momentum: "As young farmers, the decisions that are made in this budget and CAP will impact the remaining of our careers. These decisions are not only about spending envelopes; they are about giving the right signals to the next generations and telling them that there is a future in and for the agricultural sector."

Adding to the setback for young farmers, the new proposed EU budget methodology was prepared in a rushed manner, disregarding the essential period of stakeholder consultations to present the proposals in a collegial way, based on consensus and transparency. As an organisation which has always defended the European community and its values, and made them a reality on the ground, CEJA deplores such a work methodology from EU institutions, which can only break the trust that young citizens place in the EU.

Today, CEJA demands that the European Commission make transparency on the process which has led to the deletion of the ring-fencing for young farmers and clarify its intentions towards young farmers. As repeated multiple times, providing tools to young farmers without any clear guarantee of delivery is not enough of a signal. As a Strategy for Generational Renewal will be published this Autumn, it is high time to align words with actions.

The European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA) represents the political interests of around two million young farmers from across Europe. Its main objectives are to facilitate the installation of young farmers, to inform and train them as well as act as a forum for communication and dialogue between them.

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