



Public consultation "Modernising and Simplifying the Common Agricultural Policy"

HIGHLIGHTS

Basic figures:

322 916 submissions (including large public campaigns)

1 423 position papers

58 520 replies to the on-line questionnaire:

- **21 386 farmers (36,5%)**
- **27 893 other citizens (47,7%)**
- **9241 organisations (15,8%)** covering private companies, public authorities, trade, business or professional organisations, NGOs and platforms, and research and academia.

High public interest on agriculture, rural areas and the CAP

The public consultation on "modernising and simplifying the Common Agricultural Policy" confirms a high public interest on agriculture, food, and the CAP: the **322 916 submissions** received include large organised campaigns and **58 520 replies to the on-line questionnaire** from individuals and organisations as well as **1423 position papers**.

This level of participation exceeds the expectations and largely exceeds participation of EU citizens in previous consultations on the future of the CAP (the 2010 public debate reached 5700 submissions).

More importantly, with this public consultation the European Commission managed to gather the **widest possible range of views and concerns** about EU agriculture and **enlarge the debate on the CAP to the wider public**.

This wide societal interest shows again that agriculture and the CAP concern the whole European society and that CAP impacts go much beyond the agricultural community.

Keeping a strong Common Agricultural Policy at EU level

The outcome of the public consultation shows a high interest in keeping a **common EU policy on agriculture and rural development**. A consensus emerges on the **EU value added of the CAP**.

The need to guarantee a level playing field within the single market and the existence of cross-border challenges like food security, environment or climate change (with a positive reply of more than 90% of the respondents) emerge as key reasons that justify an agricultural policy commonly managed at EU level. Other justifications include the need to have a common position at international level (83%), the need to maintain economic, social and territorial cohesion across the EU (86%) as well as the need for a common framework for sharing best practices (91%). There is also widespread support for a common budget as this is considered more efficient (62%).

Furthermore, with a consensus among the different stakeholders, the EU emerges as the appropriate level of government to mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change (85%), contribute to a high level of environmental protection across the EU (73%), address market uncertainties (67%) and encourage the supply of healthy and quality products (62%). Views differ between farmers and the other citizens as regards ensuring a fair standard of living for farmers, securing food supply at reasonable prices and the development of rural areas.

While there is a consensus on the need for EU action (and a clear opposition to the renationalisation of the policy), the positions provided by organised stakeholders differ as regards the specific allocation of responsibilities between the EU and the Member States: while some stakeholders call for more flexibility at national/regional level in order to adapt the policy implementation to their specific local needs, other organisations ask for a stronger action at EU level in order to guarantee a level playing field.

Confirming challenges ahead

The public consultation highlights the **fair standard of living for farmers, the pressures on the environment and climate change (both mitigation and adaptation)** as the three most pressing challenges that EU agriculture and rural areas have to face.

At the same time, it shows a strong public awareness of the lower level of farm income as compared to the EU average (88%), of the fact that farmers get a limited share of prices consumers pay (97%) as well as of the existence of stricter production requirements in the EU than outside the EU (87%). Access to land and low profitability are clearly identified as the most relevant barriers to becoming a farmer.

As regards the specific environmental challenges, clear priority is given by respondents (both farmers and non-farmers) to the protection of biodiversity, reduction of soil degradation and a more sustainable use of pesticides and fertilisers.

Need for a simpler and more effective policy

The participants to the public consultation consider that the current **CAP successfully addresses these challenges to some extent only (57%)**. This view is shared among different types of respondents (farmers, other citizens and organisations).

All types of respondents (farmers, other citizens and organisations) also share a negative reply when assessing to what extent the current CAP addresses the environmental challenges (63%).

The excess of bureaucracy and lack of attention to sustainability are often highlighted as the main problems/obstacles preventing the current policy from successfully delivering on its objectives. At the same time, “greening”, aid applications and controls are identified as the most burdensome and complex elements. The call for a reduction of administrative burden is a generalised demand in the papers submitted by farmers and public administrations.

Different perceptions on the economy and environment...

Asked about the **contributions of farmers to our society**, contrasting views emerge: farmers see themselves as responsible for supplying healthy, safe and diversified products as well as ensuring that enough food is available; the other citizens also see farmers as suppliers of healthy and safe products but this productive role goes hand in hand with the responsibility to protect the environment and ensure animal health and welfare.

These different views also emerge in the definition of the **objectives of the CAP**: while farmers put the focus on ensuring their fair standard of living, other citizens pay greater attention to the supply of healthy and quality products and contributing to a high level of environmental protection.

Respondents also differ when examining the role of the CAP vis-à-vis the **10 Commission priorities for 2014-2020**: while farmers consider that the CAP should do more on boosting investment, growth and employment as well as strengthening the EU single market, the other citizens focus the attention on mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change and providing renewable energy.

...and new societal demands

However, beyond the already known economic and environmental objectives, the public consultation confirms the call to pay greater attention to new societal demands within the scope of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Animal welfare, organic farming and quality products emerge in the demands for new objectives of the CAP. Consumer protection and the incorporation of health standards appear also in the written contributions submitted by the non-farmer participants and certain stakeholders.

Agreement on the call for a modern and simpler CAP

Respondents to the public consultation agree with the need to provide income support for farmers (66%) as well as with the need to improve farmers' position in value chains (96%), the need to support targeted investments (81%) and the need to deliver more benefits for environment and climate (77%).

When asking which criteria should be used for allocating direct support, farmers give a clear preference to compensating farming activities in Areas with Natural Constraints/High Natural Value Areas, establishing limits in the support for large beneficiaries (capping) and supporting young farmers. The other citizens consider that practices with the highest environmental benefits as well as small producers deserve attention when allocating direct support.

Water (quality and quantity), soil protection and biodiversity clearly emerge as the most relevant environmental objectives under the CAP. In parallel, the most relevant actions considered to better address climate change are the reduction of GHG emissions, carbon storage and sequestration, climate change adaptation as well as diversification of the farming systems. In this domain, farmers largely agree on the idea that the CAP would be simpler if more choice was given in terms of environmental measures.

Finally, in terms of specific suggestions for simplification, there is a clear agreement among stakeholders on the positive effects of reducing the overlaps between Rural Development and other CAP measures (69%), the better use of databases and technologies (remote sensing, smart phones) to reduce farms inspections (62%) as well as the use of a more extensive use of e-government tools (63%).

Next steps

Replies to the on-line public consultation as well as a summary of the results of the open public consultation will be published at:

https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/consultations/cap-modernising/2017_en

The outcome of the on-line public consultation, together with other consultation activities, will feed into the Communication on “Modernising and Simplifying the Common Agricultural Policy” as well as the impact assessment the future of the CAP.

The contributions received in the public consultation cannot be regarded as the official position of the European Commission and its services.